



## **Module 10: Health Information Technology**

### Part 1: Using Data to Inform Practice

Hi, my name is Anne Lynn. I am with Public Health Management Corporation which is a public health institute and human services agency that services southeastern Pennsylvania and beyond. I'm going to talk about health information technology and how it fits into the Healthy People 2020 objectives and goals.

The purpose of this first module is to learn about the purpose of Healthy People 2020 and learn about the health information technology, or HIT, goals for Healthy People 2020. Then, we are going to talk about how HIT can be applied to meet the goals of Healthy People 2020.

What is Healthy People? Very briefly, it's an ongoing federal initiative to identify nationwide health improvement priorities and objectives. Healthy People goals can range from monitoring specific diseases to increasing access to the Internet for aging adults. Healthy People started in 1979, and we are in the fourth installment of decades long health improvement initiatives.

Talking about the health communication and HIT objectives within Healthy People 2020, one of the objectives for HIT is to use health communication strategies and health information technologies to improve population health outcomes and health care quality and to achieve health equity. There are 13 health communication and HIT objectives for Healthy People 2020.

Let's talk about what HIT is. The purpose of HIT is to improve efficiency and quality of care. You'll hear me say that a lot. HIT is the use of computer applications to record, store, protect, retrieve, and transfer clinical, administrative, and financial information always electronically and within and among various health care settings. HIT can also refer to hardware, software, and device technologies such as tablets or interface capability with ultrasound, radiology and any other equipment used for diagnostics or procedures. Anything that enhances health services and improves data collection through technology can be considered HIT.

One of the HIT objectives is to increase what's known as meaningful users of electronic health records. We're going to learn about electronic health records, but this Healthy People goal is an example of government realizing the capacity of HIT to improve quality of care and health outcomes and making an investment to improve health.

Let's talk about EHRs. What is an electronic health record? An EHR is an electronic record of patient health information generated by one or more encounters in any delivery setting. Included in this information are usually things like patient demographics, progress notes, problems, medications, vital signs, past medical history, immunizations, laboratory data, and radiology reports. Any piece of information that's generated when you go to a doctor or health care setting office or clinical setting is captured within EHR.



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Like other software developers and applications, there are hundreds of developers of EHRs. Some products are designed for certain settings like hospitals or specialty care offices, and some are only modular with different component functionalities. EHRs can really help streamline the collection of information generated within each patient visit or encounter.

Let's talk about where we are and where we're going. We can't really extract data from a pile of paper charts. The only electronic piece of paper medical charts as they exist today are billing records, which don't really include specific diagnosis codes, or procedure notes, or the history of an illness.

This is another example of government investment in HIT infrastructure, which is known as the meaningful use program. The stimulus bill in 2008 appropriated \$19 billion for financial incentives to help health care practices all over the nation make the transition from paper charts to electronic health records. The program is six years along, and practices can receive up to \$63,500 per provider. It may sound like a lot of money, but a practice transitioning from paper to electronic health records is a massive interdisciplinary project that takes years of planning and execution. This transition is essential to creating a national health information network, which we will talk about.

Who are the stakeholders in HIT? It's usually patients, obviously. It's good to understand who all the stakeholders are. HIT is an interorganizational industry. Patients have hundreds, if not thousands, of clinical and financial data points related to their care. Clinicians and clinical staff are responsible for recording this information electronically into the patient's electronic health record.

Payers like insurance companies can incentivize improvement of patient health based on care data, which can lower premiums for employers. Health data can help guide government initiatives and can also facilitate development of new products that will improve care. There are also stakeholders like technology developers who respond to demand for new products. HIT is a quintessential example of necessity being the driver for invention.

The vision of HIT is health information exchange. The goal of a health information exchange is to facilitate access to and retrieval of clinical data, and this is to provide safer, timelier, more efficient, more effective, more equitable patient-centered care. To accomplish this, data generated at the point of care has to be captured electronically in a safe, thorough, and secure way so it can then be exchanged to other settings where the patient is seen or where the patient information is managed.

The end goal here and the reason government, and payers, and private foundations, and clinics all over the country are pouring such massive resources to start moving resources into this initiative is to start moving the building blocks of a national health information exchange into place. But, first, we have to start brick by brick which is converting paper medical records into electronic health records and to ensure that they're used in a meaningful way. This is all part of the Healthy People 2020 initiative.



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Let's quickly review what we talked about in this module. We talked about the purpose of Healthy People 2020. That purpose is to identify and align national health initiatives and objectives. One of the 13 HIT objectives in Healthy People 2020 is to increase meaningful users of electronic health records. Electronic health records can help facilitate population health initiatives and health information exchanges. That's the end of module one.