

Data Infrastructure in the Works

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The National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS) workgroup on the national health information infrastructure (NHII) released an interim report on its work toward a dialogue that focuses on leveraging technology innovation and communications to provide opportunities for health improvements on a national and global scale. The report stated that "the framework that can link health improvements and information technologies is the NHII."

The report acknowledged that the NHII does not yet exist in a comprehensive way. However, many pieces of an NHII are well developed and already in use, while others are only now emerging and evolving. The workgroup envisions the NHII as the set of technologies, standards, applications, systems, values, and laws that support all facets of individual health, healthcare, and public health.

The NHII is not an effort to collect personal health data from individuals or healthcare providers, nor is it the creation of a centralized government database to store personal information about individuals. Instead, it is meant to offer a way to connect distributed health data in the framework of a secure network.

Other benefits of the NHII include enhanced access to consumer health information, peer and support services, greater choice of care, tracking of health histories over a lifetime, and increased accountability for quality and costs. Another goal of the NHII is to improve community health by taking seemingly isolated events, identifying patterns and trends, and suggesting public health actions to safeguard populations. The interim report may be obtained at <http://ncvhs.hhs.gov/NHII2kReport.htm>.

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