

Ten Years Later, Reflecting on 'A Good Goal'

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Almost 10 years ago, President George W. Bush did something remarkable. He set out a grand plan for electronic health records (EHRs).

“Within 10 years, every American must have a personal electronic medical record. That’s a good goal for the country to achieve,” Bush said during the American Association of Community Colleges annual convention in April 2004.¹ Shortly after, the *Federal Register* published an executive order establishing “Incentives for the Use of Health Information Technology” and the National Health Information and Technology Coordinator position.

Where and When It’s Needed

The executive order describes the work of the national coordinator as “developing a nationwide interoperable health information technology infrastructure that ensures that appropriate information to guide medical decisions is available at the time and place of care.”² These words still resonate in AHIMA’s vision of “health information where and when it’s needed.”

Prior to that time, there hadn’t been a government entity whose sole function was to advance health information technology. Neither had there been a consistent national government spotlight on the possible benefits of EHRs. This development helped the EHR get moving in 2004, to be followed by another boost from the HITECH Act and “meaningful use” EHR Incentive Program in 2009.

Encouragement and Complexity

The articles in this issue cast a spotlight on where we are with EHRs at this pivotal time. In “[Healthcare Reaches the EHR Tipping Point](#),” Mary Butler takes a look at what’s working and what needs improvement with health IT, according to HIM professionals and others using EHRs. While there are still frustrations, there are also hopeful notes. “There’s an excitement that this may not only be the future career of people who used to push the paper around,” says William Bria, MD, in the article, “but time for a new generation and especially trained medical records department to be far more engaged with the medical community.”

Communication via social media and other platforms such as texting present special challenges in healthcare. Dana McWay and K. Jody Smith address some of these complex issues in “[Status Update: Social Media Exchanges are Sometimes Part of the Health Record](#).”

Finally, Chris Dimick takes a closer look at the work of the ECRI Institute Patient Safety Organization’s health IT hazard reporting system, which collects information about health IT hazards via the Internet to create a central repository of data in “[Warning: Health IT May Be Hazardous to Your Healthcare](#).”

Ten years on, have we met Bush’s goal of a personal electronic medical record for every citizen? Not quite. But progress is being made. It’s a transformational moment, and we look forward to the changes the next decade will bring.

Notes

1. “President Unveils Tech Initiatives for Energy, Health Care, Internet.” Press release, April 26, 2004. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040426-6.html>.
2. “Executive Order 13335: Incentives for the Use of Health Information Technology and Establishing the Position of the National Health Information Technology Coordinator.” *Federal Register* vol. 69, no. 84. April 30, 2004.

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2004-04-30/pdf/04-10024.pdf>.

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