

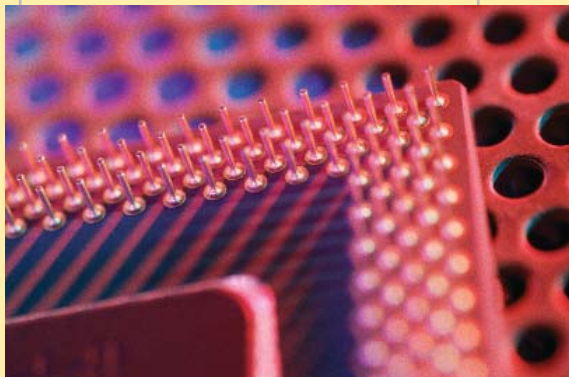
# TECHNOLOGY NEWS

IN HEALTH CARE

## Utah Medicaid Reimburses SNFs For HIT

### Program Funded By Facility Provider Taxes

The utilization of health information technology (HIT) to boost quality and efficiency in long term care may soon become more than an expensive idea for nursing facilities in Utah, thanks to a new Medicaid quality incentive program that reimburses providers for the purchase of hardware or software that enhances facilities' "clinical information systems."



The HIT Quality Improvement Incentive program was developed through the cooperation of the Utah Medicaid agency and the Utah Health Care Association (UHCA) in order to bring facilities "closer to adopting electronic medical records (EMRs)," according to John Curless, associate actuary with the Utah Medicaid Agency's Reimbursement Unit.

According to Gary Kelso, chief executive officer of Mission Health Services, Huntsville, Utah, and UHCA president, the value of HIT in long term care is obvious. "We felt we had to get our state on board with how critical it is," he says. "So we met with

the [Medicaid agency] and said, 'We need to talk about HIT.'"

In creating the program, Kelso and other industry stakeholders convinced the state to set aside money from its nursing facility provider tax program in order to fund the initiative. "In addition to a Medicaid rate increase last year, we were able to use up to the 5.5 percent limit under the bed-tax program to create the HIT quality incentive initiative," he says.

Funded at some \$1 million, the HIT quality incentive, which took effect on July 1, allows nursing facilities to be reimbursed when they "enhance or purchase clinical information systems" that improve patient care through better integration, the capture of more information at the point of care, or additional automated

reminders, according to the state plan amendment, which, Curless points out, has yet to be approved by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Once the program is approved, however, nursing facilities will be eligible for a reimbursement of up to \$108.02 per bed, per facility for software, while hardware purchases will be reimbursed up to \$90 per bed.

Under the program, software purchased by a facility must, at minimum, be designed to include the following: care plans, current medical conditions, medical orders, activities of daily living, medication administration records, timing of medications, medical notes,

## TECH EVENTS

### September

#### 17-19

##### IT Security World Conference And Exposition 2007

The Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco. MIT, Cambridge, Mass. Contact Registration, MIS, 498 Concord St., Framingham, MA 01702-2357, (508) 879-7999 or [www.misti.com](http://www.misti.com).

### October

#### 8-10

##### Health Care Compliance Association Audit Compliance Committee Conference

The Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, Chicago. Contact Patti Hoskin, HCCA, 6500 Barrie Rd., Ste. 250, Minneapolis, MN 55435, (888) 580-8373 or [www.hcca-info.org](http://www.hcca-info.org).

*Planning a tech event? Alert other professionals by sending meeting information to Yvette Cowan, Provider Events, 1201 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20005-4014, or in an e-mail to [ycowan@abca.org](mailto:ycowan@abca.org). Please write "Tech Events" in the subject line.*

and point-of-care data tracking. In addition to HIT, the quality incentive program includes an opportunity for providers to obtain higher reimbursement rates through measures associated with the implementation of culture change programs; updating heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems; "olfactory friendliness" improvements; added resident and visitor comfort; and an enhanced resident dining experience.

Kelso, who notes that he is in the process of eliminating all nurse stations from his facilities, sees a strong connection between culture change and HIT.

"I believe that the culture change incentive will also increase the implementation of HIT in facilities," he says, adding that he is working on a fast track to get every building in the state to convert to a culture change program. UHCA can be reached at (801) 486-6100.