



Robert M. Kolodner, M.D.
National Coordinator
Office of the National Coordinator
for Health Information Technology
200 Independence Avenue, SW ~ Room 517D
Washington, DC 20201

November 5, 2007

Dear Dr. Kolodner and staff,

We are sending a formal thanks to you and members of your staff for making time to meet with us last week to discuss the contribution that our long term care collaborative is making towards the creation and implementation of a nationwide health information network (NHIN) that will support the exchange of electronic health information.

We hope you recognized that our collaborative is made up of fully engaged experts who represent the full spectrum of long term care settings and aging services – from post-acute care settings to nursing homes, assisted living, home care, hospice, and the companies that generate a full range of products (including software) to support this care. As we described, health information exchange is critically important not only as individuals transition across this spectrum, but also as they encounter other parts of the health delivery continuum such as physician offices and hospital visits.

Our industry has worked hard to identify HIT standards and advance HIT implementation to improve the quality and continuity of care that we provide to millions of frail, elderly and disabled people around the clock every day of the year. We would like to restate our invitation to you and your staff to visit any one of several aging services providers who are recognized leaders in the implementation of HIT. We will be following up to see when a tour might best fit your schedule.

As you heard, it is critically important to us that long term care and aging services interests be fully integrated into and aligned with the national efforts to implement an interoperable NHIN. We place high value in providing strong representation at levels that will help shape policy, develop standards, and remove barriers to adoption of the HIT solutions that will address the needs of long term care and aging services. To that end, we brought to your attention several specific and current instances in which we hope the HIT needs of long term care services can be more completely integrated into the national efforts, including:

- integrating the health information exchange needs of people requiring LTC services into the current work of AHIC. For example, we will be making every effort to participate in the refinement process of the “Transfer of Care Use Case” because it is identified as one that can support the needs of both post acute care and long term care;

- ensuring the participation of representatives from the aging and disability services community as part of the AHIC successor organization. We will follow through on your suggestion to work with the AHIC Transition Grantee once that entity is named;
- supporting a focus within HITSP on the HIT standards needed for health information exchange on behalf of a person requiring LTC services; and
- advancing demonstration projects for the implementation of the NHIN and use of HIT that specifically permits the inclusion of aging and LTC services.

We also expressed the critical need to publish in the Federal Register a notice announcing the Secretary's commitment that Federal health information systems use the CHI and NCVHS-endorsed patient assessment standards. We were encouraged by your comments acknowledging this urgency.

We look forward to working with you and your staff. You can count on us to support your work in every way that we can.

Sincerely,

Barbara Manard ~ American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging

Todd Smith ~ American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living

Michelle Dougherty ~ American Health Information Management Association/AHIC Chronic Care Workgroup

Dr. William Russell and Nancy Robinson ~ American Medical Directors Association

Peter Kress ~ Center for Aging Services Technologies

Dan Cobb ~ National Association for the Support of Long Term Care/HealthMEDX, Inc.

Richard Brennan ~ National Association of Home Care and Hospice

Sue Mitchell ~ Omnicare Information Solutions/co-lead LTC-NH EHR-S Functional Profile Workgroup

(Contact Todd Smith at AHCA with any questions at: 202-898-2854 or at tsmith@ahca.org .)