



News Release

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
News Division

202-690-6343
media@hhs.gov
www.hhs.gov/news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Secure health data helping patients, doctors improve care and health

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today announced the release of new data and new opportunities for researchers and developers at the beginning of Health Datapalooza IV. This is the fourth annual national conference on health data transparency, which brings together government, non-profit, and private sector organizations to look at the potential for open data from HHS and other sources to help improve health and health care.

The [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) today released new data – including county-level data on Medicare spending and utilization for the first time, as well as selected data on hospital outpatient charges. In addition, the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) released additional information on the adoption of specific electronic health record (EHR) systems, as well as the winners of new opportunities for building innovative tools that build off health data.

“A more data driven and transparent health care marketplace can help consumers and their families make important decisions about their care,” said Secretary Sebelius. “The administration is committed to making the health system more transparent and harnessing data to empower consumers.”

Today HHS released data and tools that will help researchers and consumers take advantage of health information:

- Building on [the release last month](#) of the average charges for the 100 most common inpatient procedures, CMS [today released selected hospital outpatient data](#) that includes estimates for average charges for 30 types of hospital outpatient procedures from hospitals across the country, such as clinic visits, echocardiograms, and endoscopies.

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- CMS today released new data sets for the first time at the county level: one on [Medicare spending and utilization](#), and another on [Medicare beneficiaries with chronic conditions](#). Both data sets will enable researchers, data innovators and the public to better understand Medicare spending and service use, spurring innovation and increasing transparency, while protecting the privacy of beneficiaries. The data will also be available through an [interactive state level dashboard](#) based on the spending information, allowing users of any skill level to quickly access and use the data.
- ONC released data today from the [Regional Extension Centers](#) about the different brands of EHR products used by 146,000 doctors by state, specialty, and each doctor's stage in meaningful use attestation.
- HHS is also co-sponsoring a national competition – known as a “code-a-palooza” – to design an innovative app or tool using Medicare data that primary care providers can use to help manage patient care. The national competition, sponsored by ONC, the [Health Data Consortium](#), and the cloud software company Socrata, will give \$25,000 in prizes to the teams of coders and medical experts that build the best tools or apps by the end of Datapalooza.
- The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is demonstrating the latest applications of its two powerful health databases, the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS). HCUP is the largest collection of longitudinal hospital care data in the U.S., representing 97 percent of all inpatient hospital discharges. MEPS is the most complete source of U.S. data on the cost and use of health care services and insurance coverage, obtained through large-scale, annual surveys of families, individuals, medical providers and employers.
- ONC in coordination with the Health Resources and Services Administration selected the winners of the [Apps4TotsHealth Challenge](#), which was launched to help parents and caregivers of young children better manage their nutrition and physical activity. The winning developers, researchers, and other innovators make use of [Healthdata.gov](#) data to strengthen these tools and make them more user-friendly. [More on the winners here.](#)
- ONC also announced today the launch of the Blue Button Co-Design Challenge, designed to spur the creation of new applications that will allow patients to better use their own health data to improve their own care. The challenge will ask the public to vote on ideas from which developers will build tools to address health priorities determined by public voting.

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