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Bipartisan Policy Center Calls for Advancement of Standards and Policies for Connecting Patient Data

National standards and policies for matching patient data across settings will improve quality, reduce errors and cut costs

Washington, D.C. - To provide the American people with better health care services, there needs to be a much more widespread sharing of information among physician practices, hospitals, laboratories and pharmacies. A new level of health information exchange is needed to support coordinated, accountable, and patient-centered care to improve quality and reduce costs. To achieve electronic health information sharing, standards and policies are needed to help organizations accurately match data from multiple sources to the right patient.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's (BPC) Health Information Technology (IT) Initiative released an issue brief today, entitled, *Challenges and Strategies for Accurately Matching Patients to Their Health Data*. Based on research and input provided by more than 30 leaders representing consumers, clinicians, health plans, hospitals, health IT vendors and government, the brief outlines the challenges associated with matching patient data today and strategies to overcome these challenges.

Strategies outlined in the BPC brief include:

- § Standardizing the data fields used for matching across settings, as well as data content and data validation methods
- § Establishing widely shared and accepted benchmarks for acceptable levels of matching accuracy
- § Developing and implementing methods for sharing best practices
- § Moving toward shared services across multiple entities to promote standardization, improve accuracy and reduce burden

§ Assessing, through a public, transparent process, the feasibility, impact, and level of consumer acceptance for implementing a unique patient identifier—that can be voluntary and consumer-directed—with appropriate safeguards to protect patient privacy

“Growing pressure to enable electronic information sharing among physicians, hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies and other settings, brought about by rapidly emerging delivery system and payment reforms and expectations of meaningful use, spurred our exploration of this issue,” said Janet Marchibroda, Chair of BPC’s Health IT Initiative. “Across the country, hospitals and physicians, as well as state and community-based health information exchange initiatives, are struggling with the lack of national standards and policies for improving the accuracy and reducing the burden of matching patient data. Advancement of the strategies outlined in BPC’s issue brief will help to address these growing challenges.”

The issue brief follows one of the key recommendations released in January 2012 by BPC’s Task Force on Delivery System Reform and Health IT. The Task Force report, entitled, [Transforming Health Care: The Role of Health IT](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/Transforming%20Health%20Care.pdf) (<http://bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/Transforming%20Health%20Care.pdf>), recommends that “federal policymakers, working with industry and consumer stakeholders, should ensure the prompt development and implementation of a national strategy for improving rates of accuracy in matching patients to their health information.”

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