

Healthcare IT News

## Kolodner says U.S. docs weak on IT adoption, stresses interstate collaboration

By *Richard Pizzi, Associate Editor* | 09/25/07 |

ASHEVILLE, NC – Most patients in the United States receive care in physician practices with one or two providers, yet only four percent of these practices have electronic health records, said Robert Kolodner, MD, here Monday.

Kolodner is the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He spoke at the 13th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance (NCHICA).

“Approximately sixty-eight percent of hospitals have some kind of automation, but only eleven percent have fully-implemented EHRs,” Kolodner said. “And even worse, only a quarter of those fully-implemented hospitals say that their doctors use their electronic health records.”

Kolodner said that those sobering statistics affirmed that the United States had a long way to go before healthcare IT would be the norm in healthcare settings. Still, he indicated that the nation currently had a “unique bipartisan opportunity” to move forward with healthcare IT, if certain critical steps were taken.

“Seventy-five percent of healthcare spending occurs in the last year of a person’s life,” Kolodner said. “We need to reconfigure the way we spend so that we emphasize preventive health measures. IT is a necessary but not sufficient factor in improving healthcare quality. We’re not going to do it in this country by pouring more money in. We feel that the savings are already there to be discovered within the system.”

Kolodner stressed the importance of state-level healthcare IT initiatives and urged states to collaborate on issues such as physician licensure for interstate telehealth.

“There are certain things we can’t solve at the national level, so we need the states to work together,” he said.

According to Kolodner, telehealth, continuous home-based monitoring of patients, and personalized healthcare that relied on linking genetic data with EHRs, were premier examples of the future of healthcare IT.

“We’re not getting value for our healthcare dollar in this country,” Kolodner said. “We’re paying more, but we’re ranked much lower than most other developed nations in health outcomes. Health IT is the right thing for our families and communities, but it’s also the right business case.”