Indian Health Service
Press Release

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INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE SHARES ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM WITH NASA

Health Information Technology Transfer Between Federal Agencies Exemplifies President's Goal for Increased Coordination

Washington, D.C. - The Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), has signed a memorandum of understanding to share the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS), a suite of applications which includes an electronic health record (EHR), with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This transfer of technology will be specifically used in NASA's Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer (OCHMO). The memorandum of understanding was signed April 21, 2005. Over two years ago, NASA's OCHMO began a process of identifying a health management system for the Agency's complex array of occupations. Numerous health management systems in public and private sectors were extensively reviewed. Based upon functionality, applicability, and cost, the IHS system best met NASA's needs.

"We are pleased to be of assistance to NASA in the development of a product that combines the spirit of creativity and innovation of both agencies, for their use in improving the health services and health outcomes for their employees" said W. Craig Vanderwagen, M.D., Assistant Surgeon General and Acting Chief Medical Officer for the Indian Health Service.

The Indian Health Service is a pioneer in the use of computer technology to capture clinical and public health data. The primary clinical component of RPMS, Patient Care Component (PCC), was launched in 1984 in collaboration with the Veterans Administration's VistA program. The IHS RPMS is an integrated solution for the management of clinical and administrative information in healthcare facilities of various sizes and orientations. In a 2004 program performance review by OMB, the RPMS received top ratings.

"NASA plans to develop state of the art approaches to recording and assessing occupational health issues with this record system, and Indian health will benefit since we do not have such a tool in our existing system. NASA's commitment to seeing the application of a tool that can and will improve patient safety and quality of care is another critical part of the partnership formalized in the signing of this document," says Dr. Vanderwagen.

As part of the President's initiative to coordinate health information technology across the federal government via the appointment of David J. Brailer, M.D., PhD, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, IHS is providing NASA with the RPMS applications suite as a Federal open-

source application. NASA sought out IHS' RPMS for its integrated suite of software applications with data capture and retrieval capabilities for patient and population-level clinical and administrative data.

"NASA's decision to institute an EHR was driven by its desire for a fuller understanding of the health status of their workforce and as part of an agency-wide initiative aimed at standardizing health care delivery and improving the care of all of its employees. We are pleased that NASA's contributions of an occupational health module will provide a more flexible, usable system that will benefit other federal agencies," says Richard S. Williams, M.D., FACS, NASA's Chief Health and Medical Officer.

"The agreement between IHS and NASA is an example of the type of collaborative relationships that are being forged to leverage and share health information technology across the federal enterprise," says David J. Brailer, M.D., PhD. "This is a prime example of how the government can share technology across agencies and departments in an effort to unify architectures and benefit from other successful implementation models."

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) was instrumental in identifying the IHS product for NASA. AHRQ plays a critical role in advancing the use of health IT, especially for tracking health outcomes and advancing quality of care.

"To realize the benefits of health IT as quickly as possible, we need to use our resources effectively and strategically. AHRQ was gratified to be able to help bring about this agreement between agencies," says AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy.