Health IT Glossary of Terms

Clinical decision support: Computer programs designed to assist physicians and other health professionals with decision-making tasks, linking health observations (signs and symptoms) with health knowledge (best practices and current research) to influence choices made by clinicians to improve care.

Computerized provider order entry (CPOE): A process of electronic entry of provider instructions for the treatment of patients. Orders for pharmacy, laboratory, radiology, and treatment protocols are communicated over a computer network to the medical staff or to the departments responsible for fulfilling the order.

Disease registry, or chronic disease management system: An electronic system used to capture, manage, and provide information on specific conditions to support organized care management for all of a practioner's patients.

Document image management system (DIMS): A computer system used to track and store electronic documents and/or images of paper documents.

Electronic health record (EHR): An electronic record of patient health information, including patient demographics, notes, problems, medications, vital signs, medical history, immunizations, laboratory data, and radiology reports that has the ability to generate a complete record of a clinical patient encounter. Also known as an electronic medical record, or EMR.

Electronic prescribing: Computer-based support for the creation, transmission, dispensing, and monitoring of pharmaceutical therapies, typically in outpatient or provider settings. Also known as e-prescribing.

Health information exchange: Provides the capability to electronically move clinical information between disparate health care information systems to facilitate access to and retrieval of clinical data, thereby helping to provide safer, timely, efficient, effective, equitable patient-centered care. Also know as a regional health information organization (RHIO).

Health information technology: The hardware and software used to store, retrieve, share, and use clinical information to treat patients effectively.

Interoperability: The ability of various HIT products to exchange information safely and securely.

Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONCHIT): Provides counsel to the Secretary of HHS and Departmental leadership for the development and nationwide implementation of an interoperable health information technology infrastructure.

Personal health records: Electronic tools that offer a comprehensive view of personal health information, including information patients generate themselves, information from doctors (diagnoses and test results), and information from pharmacies and insurance companies, which allow patients to access, use, share, and coordinate their personal health information.