

MARKLE FOUNDATION

For Immediate Release

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Health IT Investments Should Enable People to Download Their Own Information ...at the click of a blue button

Markle Connecting for Health Collaboration Agrees on 'How To' Policies

Veterans, Medicare beneficiaries near 'blue button' access
*Markle collaboration includes support from 50 organizations;
recommends specific privacy practices*

NEW YORK (Aug. 31, 2010)—The simple, but rarely offered, ability for people to download their health records should be a priority in the nationwide push to upgrade health information technology, according to a policy paper released today by the Markle Foundation.

Representing a wide array of providers, consumers, technology companies, insurers, and privacy advocates—50 organizations today declared their support for a specific set of privacy and security practices for the “blue button.”

The public-private collaborative group envisions the blue button as a common offering among secure websites for patients and beneficiaries by medical practices, hospitals, insurers, pharmacies, laboratories, and information services.

“By clicking the blue button, you could get your own health information electronically—things like summaries of doctor visits, medications you are currently taking, or test results. Being able to have your own electronic copies and share them as you need to with your doctors is a first step in truly enabling people to engage in their health care,” said Carol Diamond, MD, MPH, managing director at Markle.

“This capability is not common today, but we have the opportunity to make it a basic expectation—especially now that billions of public dollars will be flowing to help subsidize health information technology,” Diamond said.

The paper is being released as Medicare and the U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) prepare to implement a blue button this fall that will, for the first time, allow beneficiaries to electronically download their claims or medical information in a common format from the My Medicare.gov and My HealtheVet secure websites.

President Obama announced the blue button for veterans in an August 3 address. “For the first time ever, veterans will be able to go to the VA website, click a simple blue button and download or print your personal health records so you have them when you need them, and can share them with your doctors outside of the VA,” the President said.

The Markle collaboration’s recommendations are timely because the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act requires that individuals be able to receive electronic copies of their records from providers’ electronic health record systems. In addition, new federal economic stimulus rules require health care providers and hospitals to deliver electronic copies of things like lists of medications, after-visit summaries, and lab results if they choose to participate in federal subsidies for using health information technology.

The Markle policy recommendations reflect consensus on one means by which this can be accomplished today, securely and efficiently. The group details privacy policies and practices for implementing the download capability with sound authentication and security safeguards and suggests practices to help individuals make informed choices about downloading their information. For example, it recommends specific language to remind individuals not to download or store their personal health information on shared computers.

Christine Bechtel, vice president of the National Partnership for Women & Families, and a member of the federal Health IT Policy Committee, supported the Markle policy paper.

“People see a lot of different health care providers over time, so giving them a convenient option to securely assemble their health information from multiple sources will help them better manage and coordinate their own care,” Bechtel said. “This capability is one of the simplest and most direct ways of helping patients and families see the benefits of the federal health IT investments that they, as taxpayers, have helped fund.”

The proposed privacy policies build on the Markle Common Framework for Networked Personal Health Information, a set of recommended practices for individual access to information and privacy. The framework, first released in 2006, [is widely supported](#) by a range of technology companies, insurers, provider groups, and consumer and privacy advocates.

“We recommend specific privacy policies to help individuals make informed choices about downloading their personal health information, and to emphasize sound authentication and security practices,” said Josh Lemieux, director of personal health technology at Markle. “By supporting this set of policies, a wide range of leaders commit to practices that encourage individual access to information in a way that respects privacy and security.”

The following organizations declared their support for the policy paper, *Markle Connecting for Health Policies in Practice: The Download Capability*:

AARP • Allscripts Healthcare Solutions • American Academy of Family Physicians • American College of Cardiology • American College of Emergency Physicians • American Health Information Management Association • American Medical Association • Anakam Inc. • Axolotl • BlueCross BlueShield Association • Center for Connected Health • The Children’s Partnership • Center for Democracy and Technology • Center for Medical Consumers • Children’s Health Fund • Chilmark Research • Computer Sciences

Corporation • Consumers Union • Dossia Consortium • DrFirst • Google • Initiate, an IBM Company • The Institute for Family Health • Intel Corporation • Intuit Health • Keas, Inc. • LifeMasters-StayWell Health Management • Markle Foundation • McKesson Technology Solutions/RelayHealth • MedCommons • Medical Group Management Association • MedicAlert Foundation • Meditech • Microsoft Corporation • National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship • National Committee for Quality Assurance • National Partnership for Women & Families • National Quality Forum • NaviNet • Pacific Business Group on Health • PatientsLikeMe • Prematics, Inc. • Press Ganey • PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP • RTI International • Vanderbilt Center for Better Health • Visiting Nurse Service of New York • Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. • WebMD Health • Wellport

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Markle Connecting for Health is a public-private collaborative with representatives from more than one hundred organizations across the spectrum of health care and information technology specialists. Its purpose is to catalyze the widespread changes necessary to realize the full benefits of health information technology while protecting patient privacy and the security of personal health information. Markle Connecting for Health tackles the key challenges to creating a networked health information environment that enables secure and private information sharing when and where it is needed to improve health and health care. Learn more about Markle Connecting for Health at www.connectingforhealth.org.

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