

Family Physicians Outpacing Other Physicians in Adopting EHR Technology

Family physicians are adopting electronic health records (EHRs) at a faster pace than any other group of office-based physician. According to a study published in the *Annals of Family Medicine*, 68 percent of family physicians were using EHRs in 2011. The implementation rate among family physicians has doubled since 2005, and is predicted to surpass 80 percent by the end of 2013. Jason Mitchell, MD, director of the American Academy of Family Physicians' Center for Health IT, says that the Future of Family Medicine report and initiatives aimed at increasing primary care payments have prompted family physicians to adopt EHRs in an effort to provide quality health care efficiently and on a budget. For more information, visit <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/practice-professional-issues/20130201ehradoptrates.html>.

HHS Strengthens HIPAA with New Rule

An omnibus rule recently released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights will improve the security of consumer health data. This represents the most extensive changes to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) since it was implemented in 1996. The new rule, which takes effect March 26, 2013, extends HIPAA requirements to physicians' business associates and subcontractors; establishes new limitations on using personal health information for marketing or fundraising; prohibits the sale of personal health information without individual authorization; and expands patients' rights to receive electronic copies of their health information and, in some instances, restrict disclosure of their information to health insurance plans. Physicians must be in compliance by September 23, 2013. For more information, visit <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/practice-professional-issues/20130204hipaomnibus.html>.

Vaccination Rates in Adults Still Below Target Levels, According to the CDC

Data published in the February 1, 2013, issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* show little improvement in noninfluenza vaccination rates among adults from 2010 to 2011. Although there were modest increases in tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccination overall and in human papillomavirus vaccination in women, coverage rates for the pneumococcal, herpes zoster, and hepatitis B vaccines remain well below target levels set

by the HHS Healthy People 2020 initiative. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that a successful adult vaccination program combines patient education and publicity, increased access to vaccinations, and use of practices known to improve vaccination coverage (e.g., reminders, removal of financial and administrative barriers, standing order programs). Physician recommendations are also associated with patients receiving vaccinations. For more information, visit <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/health-of-the-public/20130204adultrates.html>.

Primary Care Physician Shortage Affecting Patient Health, Report Says

The shortage of primary care physicians has led to higher rates of preventable illness and death, according to a report issued by the chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging. The report asserts that primary care improves health outcomes, reduces health disparities, and lowers spending, yet nearly 57 million Americans live in areas with inadequate access to primary care, forcing them to use other services such as the emergency department. To help curb the shortage, the report recommends increasing primary care scholarship and loan-repayment programs and improving opportunities for primary care education and residencies in community settings. For more information, visit <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/government-medicine/20130206helpreport.html>.

OSHA Launches Online Physician Resource

A new online resource from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) addresses work-related health and safety issues that health care professionals may encounter. The tool helps physicians navigate all of the resources available on OSHA's main website, including information about evaluating occupational exposures, OSHA requirements for record-keeping, and maintaining a safe outpatient office. For more information, visit <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/news-in-brief/20130206wklynewsbrfs.html#NewsArticleParsys39569> and <http://www.osha.gov/dts/oom/clinicians/index.html>.

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