



***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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CCHF Renews Call on Feds to Stop Pushing Health Data Online Amid Allegations It Won't Reduce Costs or Improve Care

*HITECH Act Computerizes Patient Data Without Consent;
Raising Privacy Concerns and Trust Issues*

Key Facts:

- The \$27 billion HITECH Act that computerizes all health data by 2015 has increased costs and has not been shown to meet its stated goals of lowering healthcare delivery costs or improving care, resulting in a request from the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee to halt incentive payments related to its implementation.
- The Act also mandates computerization of medical records and pushes patients' private health information online, increasing patient privacy concerns and trust issues.
- The Citizens' Council for Health Freedom advocates informed, written patient consent by citizens prior to sharing or linking medical data online through state health information exchanges and the proposed Nationwide Health Information Network.

ST. PAUL, Minn. –Michael Grunwald recently wrote in [Healthcare IT News](#) that health IT was one of the most transformative programs promoted by President Obama's \$27 billion Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health – or HITECH – Act within the Recovery Act. By computerizing medical data under the guise of cost control and improved healthcare delivery, the U.S. government has been able to implement what HHS Secretary Sebelius called the “foundation” for Obamacare. This readily accessible patient data would be used to implement the tracking and pay-for-performance functions of mandatory health care.

HITECH was also purported to lower the cost of healthcare by reducing unnecessary or repeat tests and doctors' visits, while offering healthcare professionals the ability to serve their patients better based on easier access to their medical records.

But the House Ways and Means Committee recently asked U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to suspend incentive payments related to the Electronic Health Record (EHR) program, amid concerns that the program is leading to greater inefficiencies without reducing costs or improving health outcomes.

The [Citizens' Council for Health Freedom](#) applauds this position, but urges the Committee to reconsider its call to implement EHRs and enhance interoperability and online access, instead replacing it with private-market solutions that are coupled with consent requirement and individual responsibility for private health records. In addition, CCHF calls for States to implement true patient privacy laws, as allowed under the HIPAA privacy rule.

“States cannot continue to allow their citizens’ private health data to float around in a proverbial IT cloud without the patient’s consent. At stake is patient trust in the entire health care system, and with it access to timely, effective, accurate medical care,” said Twila Brase, President of the Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom. “Left to its own devices, the market would fix interoperability issues on its own, while creating better protections for sensitive health data, or else patients would solve the problem themselves by carrying their private data on portable media such as DVDs or thumb drives. The problems that the government continues to ignore are privacy and patient consent; no EHR program should move forward until every American has a guaranteed right of consent over the use and sharing of their private medical records.

The *Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom* is advocating for individual control over private health data. Citizens should be given the option of understandable, meaningful informed consent and be allowed to carry their own data on portable media.

“At CCHF, we want the country to know the truth about the privacy – or lack thereof – when medical records are computerized and put online,” said Brase. “HITECH pushes people’s private data online without consent, and if interoperability standards are achieved, records will be shared in the cloud without a patient’s knowledge. To better protect its citizens, states must enact and enforce strict informed consent laws regarding the sharing of computerized health records.”

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Twila Brase is president and co-founder of the *Citizens’ Council for Health Freedom*. She has been called one of the “100 Most Powerful People in Health Care” and one of “Minnesota’s 100 Most Influential Health Care Leaders.” The Council’s efforts have stopped government-issued treatment directives, added informed consent requirements for access to patient data and defeated a proposed Health Insurance Exchange. Brase’s daily radio commentary, *Health Freedom Minute*, is a 60-second radio address on pressing health care issues. She has been interviewed by CNN, Fox News, The Washington Post and The Washington Times, among others.