The Office of the National Coordinator for
Health Information Technology

Implementing the HHS-EC MoU on Cooperation Surrounding Health ICT

Transatlantic Cooperation Assembly

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ONC

US Department of Health & Human Services

- December 17, 2010: Secretary Kathleen Sebelius signed non-binding MoU with European Commission
  - Facilitate availability and routine use of international standards
  - Strengthen relationships and cooperation on mutual health ICT goals
- MoU outlines approach to foster mutual understanding of challenges faced by both sides in advancing the use of health IT
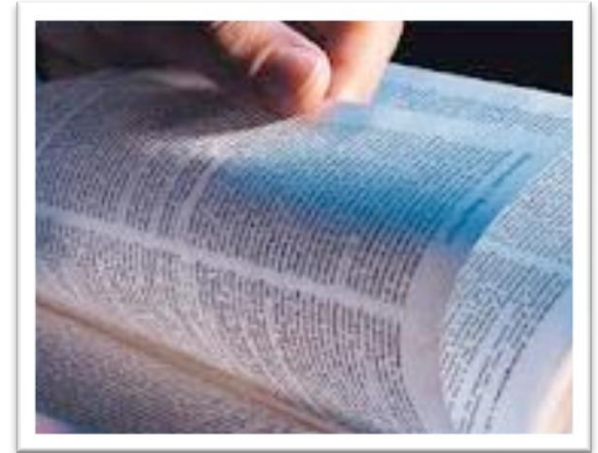
- Development of internationally recognized standards & specifications for interoperability

- Strategies to promote and develop a highly skilled health IT technical/support workforce
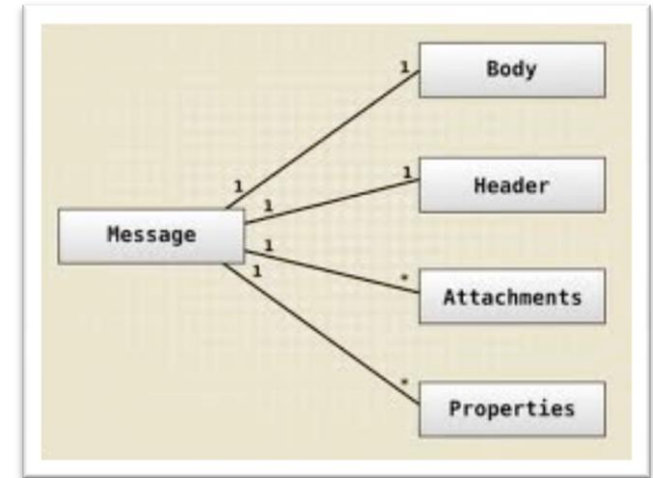
- Expected to describe progress to date and next steps on issues of immediate importance
  - Cooperation on promotion and development of internationally recognized interoperability standards
  - Cooperation around development of strategies to address workforce challenges related to eHealth/Health IT
  - Ongoing discussions re: further activities
  - Expect to define both the next 12-18 months of activities, in the setting of the larger and farther reaching goals
  - Pilots and demonstrations, grounded in real world experiences to inform international collaboration

- Achieving interoperability across international borders is a key goal of immediate importance and immense potential.

- 3 distinct work streams:
  - Standardized terminology
  - Standard message structure
  - Standardized patient-controlled electronic exchange

Standardized Terminology

- Indispensable foundation of interoperable health information exchange

- Identifying sets of terms used by US and EU Member States to capture and convey:

  – Clinical data

  – Laboratory data

  – Rx data

  – Administrative data

- Strategy for finalizing and maintaining standardized terminologies must be identified

- Have already begun preliminary analysis comparing US-adopted standardized terminologies and those in use in, and for exchange between, EU Member States

Standard Message Structure

- We would consider working within the process of an international SDO (such as HL7 or ISO TC 215), to identify an internationally recognized standard message structure for international health information exchange.

    - A potential starting point would be HL7's consolidated CDA but other potential candidates will be evaluated

    - Technical specifications will subsequently be refined

    - Format will go through SDO's formal balloting process

    - Countries will then need to promote broad adoption

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- Maintaining security & privacy of health information is a key shared priority

- Policy and technical coordination and alignment between the EU and US that respects policy differences will be a key activity

- Essential to have coordination to prevent unintended incompatibilities to shared problems

- Grounded in ongoing efforts within US and Europe
  - Informed by and building upon current & developing infrastructures in US and EU Member States
  - Guided by reciprocity & mutual benefit to US and EU Member States' citizens
- Communication at leadership and staff levels is key to success
  - Regular teleconferences to be scheduled for each work stream
  - Face-to-face meetings to be scheduled during international events (such as SDO meetings, govt. business, etc.)
- For all work streams, open government approaches are encouraged
  - Government serves as coordinator of private/public partnership efforts

Health IT Workforce Strategies

- US – HITECH Act programs that promote development of a highly skilled health IT workforce
  - Community college program/University-based training
  - Competency examination
  - Freely available curricula
- EU – "e-Skills" strategy making visible achievements
- Regular meetings will discuss long term strategies/approaches for transatlantic cooperation in workforce development

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