



VSA Weekly News

August 4, 2006

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Message from the Chairman

The Value of Membership

I have been thinking about comments made by membership about the value VSA brings to each organizational or at large level. While there is much improvement on this topic still to be developed, I wanted to detail the benefits of becoming or maintaining membership at the organizational or at large level.

The value VSA provides is different for each organization and at large member. All membership benefit from free passes to the biggest healthcare conferences (HIMSS- \$1095, TEPR \$545, AMIA - \$895, etc.) and provides an environment for alliances or employment opportunities from which to build business. Some of our larger companies participate primarily because government representatives have asked them to support the organization. Large companies also use this membership to marketing for themselves, (e.g. VistA Contractor Services proposal response).

The list of items VSA currently provides include:

- 1) Articles/Updates in the form of Newsletter about VistA which we send to membership and post them to the web.
- 2) Leads as they come in forwarded to membership (organizational members only)
- 3) Conferences - free passes if they opt in for booth bunny duty on a first come, first serve basis
- 4) Marketing on website and brochures for tying organizational members with VSA
- 5) Meetings with VA and other Health agencies depending on topics. Invite one company each time per month on call with VA, CMS, NASA, IHS and GSA.
- 6) Alliances of organizations that previously never worked together (private club)

Each one of these can be much more valuable to our membership but they need to be developed and targeted. For example:

- 1) Articles - analysis of why they are important and how to build business off them
- 2) Leads - need to be validated and detailed before going to organizational members
- 3) conferences need to have full-court press releases that include organizational members before, during and after conference
- 4) website marketing needs to be a premium for paying organizational members that give them an entire page
- 5) meetings need to be targeted and outcomes realized for companies who want to get in front of agencies
- 6) alliances – provide for an environment that is neutral to foster collaboration.

If you have ideas on how VSA could provide value to you and your organizations, please let us know.

Claudine Beron

Medical Records Remedy

By Bill Frist

From the day I took a break from my medical practice more than a decade ago to enter public service, I've seen two very different technological trends shape American medicine. On one hand, American clinical medical technology has moved ahead at an astonishing rate. From multimillion-dollar CT scan machines to cheap digital thermometers, new clinical technology helps doctors get their work done more quickly, make better diagnoses and achieve better results. On the other hand, our systems for managing medical information remain far behind the times. Today's doctors keep records the same way my father did in his medical practice: on paper.

Article Continued - [Click Here](#)

Researchers at Dartmouth College have found America wastes as much as a third of the \$1.8 trillion we spend on medical care.

Calif. governor proposes new e-records spending

Modern Healthcare

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger unveiled a plan to improve the use of electronic medical records during a state "healthcare affordability summit" Monday. The Republican governor, who is running for re-election in November, said he signed an executive order directing state officials to develop plans for spending at least \$240 million to expand medical record technology in rural communities and among safety-net providers. Schwarzenegger also proposed expanding California's school-based health clinics to 500 elementary schools from the current 147. Over the weekend, he announced a prescription-drug plan that would require pharmaceutical companies to give discounts to uninsured, low-income residents within five years or face state sanctions. In the past, Schwarzenegger has supported only voluntary compliance plans. Schwarzenegger said he hoped to develop a comprehensive healthcare reform plan by January, assuming he wins another term. Critics dismissed the summit as an election-year ploy. Meanwhile, State Treasurer Phil Angelides, the Democratic candidate for governor, released his own healthcare plan and criticized Schwarzenegger for just now tackling the issue. Angelides called for providing health insurance to all California children through the state's Healthy Families program, cracking down on HMOs' profits, forcing drug companies to provide affordable drugs and allowing people to buy prescription drugs via the Internet. He also said if elected, he would require companies with more than 200 employees to provide health insurance to workers and their families.

Capitol Hill Update

Transformational Healthcare Bill Closer to Becoming Law

HIMSS Staff

H.R. 4157 has passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 270-148. Six amendments were also passed by voice vote. Prior to the final vote, a motion to send the bill back to Committee was defeated 224-188. The rule to vote on the rule to send this legislation to the House floor for final passage was approved 224-188. The legislation will now move to the conference phase with the U.S. Senate healthcare IT legislation (S. 1418), which will occur after the August congressional recess. Please review the [report](#) explaining the bill as well as the six [approved amendments](#). All HIMSS members are encouraged to send a note of appreciation to their member of the House of Representatives (if they [voted for this bill](#)) for supporting this bill using the HIMSS [Legislative Action Center](#) and encouraging a prompt conference in September with the U.S. Senate.

VA News - VA blazes path to preventing drug

R. James Nicholson, secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington

USA TODAY's editorial on the recent Institute of Medicine report on prescription drug errors and the importance of electronic prescription systems was right on target (" [Rx for medication errors?](#)" Wednesday).

The Department of Veterans Affairs remains a world leader in patient safety and the use of technology in preventing errors associated with prescription drugs.

All VA medical centers utilize a bar-coded wrist band system to make sure the right patient gets the right medication in the right dose at the right time. This system is integrated with VA's electronic health records, and the results are stunning. VA prescribes medication to patients with an accuracy rate of 99.993%, a standard that simply does not exist anywhere else in American health care. And we maintained this standard of excellence while filling 231 million prescriptions in 2005.

Electronic prescriptions also eliminate mistakes due to bad handwriting and allow error checks to prevent medications from being given to patients who might be allergic or should not receive them for other reasons.

This success rate underscores President Bush's strong emphasis on electronic health records for all Americans. Not only do they improve patient safety and treatment, they also save money and are entirely portable. These are some of the reasons VA just received the prestigious Harvard University Innovations in American Government Award for our electronic health record system.

VA is bringing 21st century medicine to America's veterans, and I look forward to the day when all health care can offer the same measure of safety and efficiency.

"All HIMSS members are encouraged to send a note of appreciation to their member of the House of Representatives (if they voted for this bill) for supporting this bill using the HIMSS Legislative Action Center and encouraging a prompt conference in September with the U.S. Senate."

Upcoming Events

7th Annual Health IT Trends & Marketing Conference
 July 31 - August 2
 Cambridge, MA
<http://www.medrecinst.com/conference/hit/index.asp>

Veterans Affairs E-Health University Conference & Exposition
 August 21 - 24
 Nashville, TN
<http://opensourcevista.net:8888/NancysVistAServer/VEHU/>

National Conference on Health Information Capture
 September 18 - 20, 2006
 Las Vegas, Nevada
http://www.medrecinst.com/conference/InfoCap/exhibitor_prospectus.pdf

AHIMA Annual Conference
 October 7-12
 Denver, CO
<http://www.ahima.org/convention/2006/index.asp>

Healthcare Informatics Technology, "EHR - Solutions for Small Practices"
 Theme: "From Zero to GUI: Going From Paper Charting to EMRs".
 October 20
 Seattle, WA

VistA Community Leadership and VSA Membership Meeting
 November 7-8
 Perot Campus, Plano, TX

AMIA Annual Symposium
 November 11-15
 Washington, DC
<http://www.amia.org/meetings/f06/>

* Red denotes VSA Participation

HIMSS 07
 February 25-March 1, 2007
 New Orleans, LA
<http://www.himss07.org/>

TEPR 07
 May 19-23, 2007
 Dallas, TX
www.tepr.com

VSA Weekly Newsletter

VSA Weekly Newsletter is published by the VistA Software Alliance.
 If there is an article in which you think is newsworthy, please email your submission to us.

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