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Topics: Health Information Technology

Arizona to study best practices for patient matching

March 24, 2014 | By Susan D. Hall

SHARE Arizona plans to explore best practices and alternative approaches to correctly match patients to all of their available records across multiple organizations.



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The effort is part of the Health IT Roadmap 2.0 from the state's Strategic Enterprise Technology Office, which describes 19 key initiatives to advance health information technology and health information in Arizona.

"It is a controversial issue," Arizona Health-e Connection CEO Melissa Kotrys told *Healthcare Informatics*, "but when we convened stakeholders to talk about key issues, this topic of the difficulty of patient identification came up, even with master patient index solutions. So there was enough interest to explore this topic further."

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TOOLS The roadmap points out that without a unique identifier for every patient, it's difficult to ensure that records are matched to the correct patient and that all of a patient's records are associated with the individual.

"As the number of patients and the number of organizations participating in HIE grows, the complexity of correct patient record matching is magnified," the roadmap states. The plan calls for convening stakeholders to discuss the effectiveness of current approaches and for creating a committee by early to mid-2015 to study alternatives and make recommendations.

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT released recommendations in February after a study that looked at both technical and human processes involved in patient matching. Those recommendations included requiring certified electronic health record technology (CEHRT) to capture the data attributes needed to match patient records, but also to study the use of non-traditional attributes as well.

Former Sharp HealthCare CIO Bill Spooner recently told *FierceHealthIT* that patient matching efforts should be more about improving safety than achieving perfection. He stressed the need for the determination and the budget to make it a priority.

While he backs a unique identifier--which was off the table during the ONC's meetings--there are other steps organizations can take to improve matching, he said.

To learn more:
- read the [article](#)
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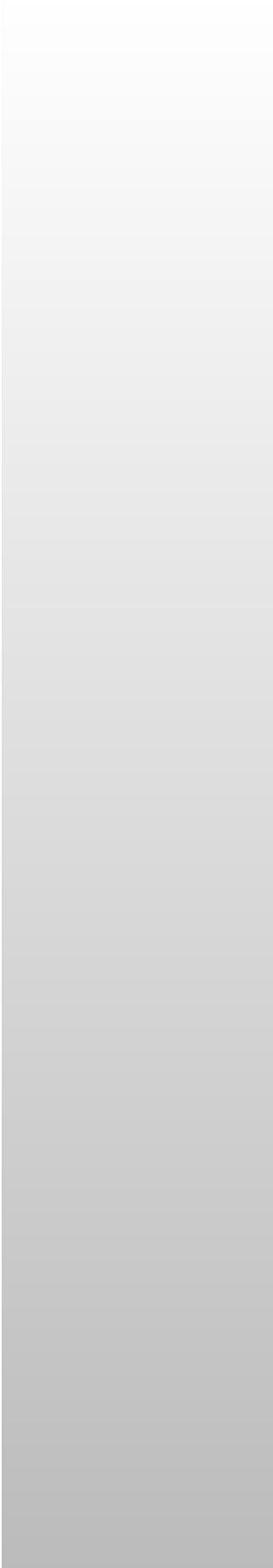
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Donna Staton is the CIO of 97-bed Fauquier Health System in Warrenton, Va. Staton earned a Master of Science degree in information technology from the University of Virginia in 2005. She is a member of CHIME and of the Virginia chapter of HIMSS.

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