

joint statement. "We share the common quest to unlock the potential in health care data, to deliver better outcomes at lower costs."

As CEO of Phoenix-based [Health Current](#), Melissa Kotrys has been working to address this interoperability problem with the introduction of a health information exchange, or HIE, which can interface with various patient records systems and allow patient records to be securely shared.

Health Current is Arizona's HIE, which includes more than 500 health care organizations, with data on more than 8 million patients.

For example, data on more than 95 percent of all Arizona hospital inpatient and emergency department admission is available for sharing through Health Current.

While other HIEs around the country have made progress, there are still interoperability challenges across the country, she said.

The total solution requires organizations within health care to address the issues of what data is captured, which national terminology standards are used to normalize data, which national standards will be used to allow direct access to data, and which national standards will be used to format and exchange data, she said.

One national standard being considered is the Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources specification, or FHIR.

"While it's encouraging to have the commitment of these major technology companies, there must also be commitment of all health care technology companies to these new standards," Kotrys said. "Moving patient information also involves navigating the complexities of state and federal laws governing patient consent, so the challenge of interoperability is complex and not an issue that has a simple financial solution."

It will take a combination of solutions, she said.

"The pledge by major technology companies to the new national FHIR standard is very welcome, and we're very supportive of the technology industry's interest and commitment in this important endeavor," said Kotrys, who was just appointed to the [HIMSS North America](#) board, one of the largest health IT professional associations. "But the promise of a national pledge should not obscure or hinder the very good work and progress being done by HIEs across the country. While we can't say what the ultimate solution will look like, we can be fairly certain that HIEs like Health Current will be a part of the national interoperability fabric."

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