

2. ONC official: Criticism of MU program interoperability 'misguided'

By Marla Durben Hirsch



Criticism of the current lack of focus on interoperability of electronic health record systems in the Meaningful Use program is "misguided," according to Judy Murphy, deputy national coordinator for programs and policy at the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, *Healthcare Informatics reports*.

Murphy, who was speaking last Friday at a symposium in Philadelphia, pointed out that Stage 2 of the program, with its objective to advance clinical process--including interoperability and patient engagement--doesn't go into effect until 2014. Stage 1 of the program is focused on data capture and sharing. The program, Murphy said, is meant to evolve.

The objective of Stage 3 of the program, which won't go into effect until at least 2016, focuses heavily on improved outcomes.

Members of Congress have continued to express concern about a lack of interoperability in the Meaningful Use program. Last fall, four House Republicans [urged the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) to change the course of the Meaningful Use program; they asked that Meaningful Use incentive payments be frozen until the agency promulgated universal interoperable standards.

And just last month, [six Republican senators expressed concern about the lack of interoperability](#), asking HHS to provide a written plan to address how the agency is implementing the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act.

Murphy said that much of the problem with interoperability is that providers currently don't work together to treat patients.

"It has more to do with the way we practice," she said, according to *Healthcare Informatics*. "Today we practice in silos. We don't create care plans that move into the community."

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