

Special Audio Report Transcript

Headline: First Electronic Health Records Start Receiving Certification Under Stage 1 of 'Meaningful Use'

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I'm Pat McConahay with a story about the first electronic health records certified under the Stage 1 "meaningful use" requirements and how certification organizations and EHR vendors think the first phase of the program is going so far. This is a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service from the California HealthCare Foundation.

InfoGard Laboratories is the third body authorized by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT to test EHR systems under a temporary certification program. The California-based company joins the Texas-based Drummond Group and the Chicago-based Certification Commission for Health Information IT, or CCHIT, as ONC-Authorized Testing and Certification Bodies under Stage 1 of the meaningful use program.

InfoGard President Maclynn Brinton says his company couldn't be more pleased. And that even though it's new to the health care industry, he believes InfoGard has something unique to bring to the table.

(Brinton): "We think we can really contribute to a lot of the issues, particularly with all the complexity regarding privacy and security and the work that has to be done prior to getting ready for the health exchange. All of that is going to put tremendous pressure on setting up the appropriate security infrastructures."

Brinton says his company has a long track record working with other industries in the security area for more than 10 years, adding that InfoGard is the only heavily accredited security laboratory among the three certifying bodies.

Since the company just became accredited, it hasn't completed any certifications yet. But CCHIT says it finished more than three dozen under the Stage 1 meaningful use criteria. Drummond Group declined to provide a number. Health care providers must demonstrate meaningful use of certified EHR products to qualify for incentive payments under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

This is the first time CCHIT has had to share the stage with other certification organizations. Until now, it was considered to be the major EHR certifying body. CCHIT Chair Karen Bell says she doesn't see this as a problem for her organization because CCHIT has other certification activities and there's a lot of work under Stage 1 of the "meaningful use" program.

(Bell): "I think that in terms of having other competition, I think it's important to note that there are new processes and new programs that are involved with the ONC-ATCB process and that that's plenty of opportunities for others to join in and help out."

CCHIT certified eClinicalWorks of Massachusetts on October 1. Co-founder Girish Navani says he commends the process overall, but adds that it wasn't without some difficulties. He says part of that was eClinical Works' fault because it was eager to be one of the first companies to receive certification and didn't give itself much time to prepare.

(Navani): "We could choose to have delayed this, but if we had delayed our certification it would, in the end, mean that our customers would have to then wait for getting that version which is required for them to use which could potentially delay their incentive dollars and we did not want to put our customers in that bind."

Navani says he decided to go with CCHIT because it had worked with the organization in the past and found it to be fairly well coordinated. Even so, because things are being tested for the first time, he says, his company needed more clarification along the way.

(Navani): "There are quite a few times when we had to ask CCHIT for further explanation of what they would constitute to be an acceptable and a successful testing criteria for that script."

Rik Drummond, whose company became the second Authorized Testing and Certification Body says the accreditation will improve the quality of EHR products.

(Drummond): "It improves them because there's price competition of course. It improves them because you have an outside authority putting in place valuation criteria which all could use depending on how many wind being ATCBs."

Drummond Group certified ChartLogic on September 29, making it one of the first certified EHRs. ChartLogic CEO Zubin Emsley said he liked having a choice of certifiers and went with Drummond because he was confident he could go through the process quickly.

(Emsley): "And they did a very good job for us. That is, they told us what the process was. They abided by the schedule and the process."

Emsley says his physician clients have been aware of the EHR incentive payment program for more than a year, so getting products certified means that the company can deliver what it has guaranteed to its clients.

In spite of the short window to get certified and the newness of the program, both ChartLogic and eClinicalWorks say they were generally pleased with the process.

This has been a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service from the California HealthCare Foundation. If you have feedback or other issues you'd like to have addressed, please email us at iHB@CHCF.org. I'm Pat McConahay. Thanks for listening.