

## Special Audio Report Transcript

Headline: Stakeholders Respond to Federal Proposal To Give Patients Full Access to Their Lab Results

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### TEXT:

Clinical labs, hospitals and health care providers say they support a new federal proposal to give patients full access to their lab results but say the plan is costly and poses many challenges. This is a special report for *iHealthBeat*, a daily news service of the California HealthCare Foundation. I'm Deirdre Kennedy.

Just how much patients get to see of their lab results varies from state to state. Some states bar patients from knowing anything more than what their doctor tells them. But once the federal rule is final, patients will be able to request a copy of their raw test results directly from the lab that processed them.

It's a major shift away from the traditional doctor-knows-best model of health care, says Eva Powell, director of Health IT Programs at the National Partnership for Women & Families.

Powell says giving patients instant access to their own medical data empowers them to take control of their own health.

***(Powell): "It sends a signal that the expectation is that you be involved here. You're no longer the passive recipient of health care. You are now an active participant in a care team that is focused on your health and wellbeing and what's right for you. And no one can simply tell you what that is."***

The American Hospital Association supports the changes but says the proposal poses a huge burden for hospital labs that process tests for outside providers or clinics. AHA Assistant General Counsel Lawrence Hughes says reference hospitals keep records only on the providers who send the tests, not the actual patients.

***(Hughes): "It may be very, very difficult for the lab to identify and specifically authenticate that that particular patient is the patient about whom this test report actually relates to."***

AHA has asked CMS to allow hospitals to deny patient requests they can't authenticate. The association also is urging HHS to move forward with creating a unique national identifier for all patients to speed up interoperability between providers nationwide. AHA would also like the final rule to make it clear to patients exactly what they will get when they ask for raw test results.

***(Hughes): "The lab test report obtained from the lab itself may not take into account the entire patient's condition and medical information etc., and so the interpretation of the lab test report is best left to the patient's treating physician."***

Labs have expressed reluctance to deliver what might be bad news to patients. The American Clinical Laboratory Association has asked CMS to let labs delay releasing "sensitive" results like cancer diagnoses until physicians can review them with the patient. But concerns that patients might get upset by results they don't understand are unfounded, says Kate Christensen, medical director of Kaiser Permanente's Internet Services Group.

***(Christensen): "I think this is well-meant concern on the physician's part. Our experience has been that if you bite the bullet, give the patients access to their results, those bad things don't happen, particularly if you link those results to information about the test."***

Kaiser has provided online lab results to its patients since 2005. Its Web portal includes links to online articles and information to help patients track and manage their conditions.

The American Clinical Laboratory Association says it fully supports the shift, but ACLA Vice President of Government Relations Jason DuBois says CMS isn't giving labs enough time to train staff and integrate new services.

***(DuBois): "They foresee this timeline taking place 240 days after they publish the final rule and we thought at the very least they should give us at least a year for providers to create systems to enable them to respond."***

HHS officials are reviewing submitted comments but say they don't yet have a release date for the final rule.

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](mailto:iHB@CHCF.org). I'm Deirdre Kennedy, thanks for listening.