

'Got EHR' Campaign Draws Wide Support

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By Neil Versel, Contributing editor

Hundreds, if not thousands, of vendor representatives, academicians and even a few government employees at the recent [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society](#) conference were sporting "GotEHR?" buttons around the Dallas Convention Center to spread the word about a new initiative to promote electronic health records.

The effort received a nationwide boost last week with the launch of a public Web site, www.got-ehr.org.

"We concluded that it important for us to push things along," explains Don Detmer, M.D., president and chief executive of the [American Medical Informatics Association](#) (AMIA), the Bethesda, Md.-based creator of the "GotEHR?" campaign.

The program operates on two premises, that EHRs help improve the quality of care and that they can improve the relationship between patients and healthcare providers. "We really see electronic health records right now as leading a transformation of our healthcare system," Detmer says.

The effort grew out of two workshops that [AMIA's American College of Medical Informatics](#) hosted at the [Institute of Medicine](#) headquarters in Washington last year with financial support from the federal [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#). Detmer chaired the IOM Board on Health Care Services for eight years.

"GotEHR?" is targeting three stakeholder groups: patients, community-based medical practices and health policy-makers. "Our sense is that hospitals are coming along on this," Detmer says in explaining why hospitals are not part of the initial focus.

According to the campaign, patients should be active participants in their own healthcare and understand the benefits of owning their own data through personal health records (PHRs). One participating organization, the [American Health Information Management Association](#), already is promoting personal health records through a program called [MyPHR](#).

Community-based clinicians are asked to encourage their patients to keep and use PHRs to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship and so clinicians have proper information to make informed healthcare decisions. "GotEHR?" also says that clinicians must "understand the realities and myths about EHR implementation."

The campaign also will be encouraging policy-makers to "support a friendly commercial environment for EHRs" and to make sure that government policies on the usage of patient information do not conflict with the goals of improving healthcare quality and reining in escalating costs. The group advocates policies that reward clinician adoption of technology.

Detmer says that the groups are trying to develop a more detailed strategy for each area, though the issue of training the healthcare workforce is in particular need of more study. "We've got a huge educational challenge ahead," he admits.

Several prominent health-IT and quality advocates offered their viewpoints in the January/February edition of the [Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association](#).

Other participating organizations include the [HIMSS EHR Vendors Association](#), PHR advocate [Connecting for Health](#), the Office of the [National Coordinator for Health Information Technology](#), the [AARP](#), the [Ad Council](#) and the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#).