

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on How Information Technology Supports the Healthcare Industry

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In the current environment, it will be an understatement to say that the US Health Care Industry is in the midst of a major transformation. Supreme Court declared the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA 2010) legislation to be the law of the land in June 2012. To show their perspective, the latest Congress symbolically repealed the law in July 2012. At this time, it remains the law of the land. In spite of these doldrums, besides the political and legal side of the health care debate, another force – information technology – is being positioned as catalyst to solve some of the underlying issues that prompted a need for health care reform. This special issue is dedicated to presenting case studies describing how information technology is supporting health care industry.

In the opening case, “St. Luke’s University Health Network: Strategic Use of Health Information Technology” Dr. Susan Sherer presents how information technology projects were influencing the institution’s strategic objectives. By utilizing both project management and governance, St. Luke implemented processes to prioritize IT projects to fit with the institution’s overall strategy.

The cost of health care has been spiraling. To entice new customers, reducing costs and providing ample access to the customers are important. In addition, the consumers’ perception about the company’s effort to control costs and sustaining quality health care for members are equally significant. The case “Health Care Reform Requires IT Solutions to Influence Consumer Perception at a Health Care Payer,” by Dr. Bhaskar and Mr. Vo, highlights how business intelligence can help influence customer’s perception health care cost and quality.

Dr. Kapoor and Dr. Kleinbart collaborated on presenting how Citrus Valley Health Partners (CVHP) coped with the HITECH Act in “Building an Integrated Patient Information System for a Healthcare Network.” The regulation called for a better and more meaningful use of the Electronic Health Record (EHR), in which partnering hospitals, local clinics and hospices are required to exchange information with efficiency. The case presents how there are wide array of industry and regulations standards that influence information technology integration at CVHP.

Social media has been pervasive in many industries, and health care is not an exception.

The case, “Exploring Social Media for Health and Wellness: A Health Plan Case Study,” by Dr. Mitra and Dr. Padman explores the new avenue of using social media in disseminating health products and services. In this case study of a large health plan in Pennsylvania, the authors describe the design and execution of a member survey to identify some factors that are significantly associated with interest in adopting social media technology platforms for obtaining health-related information and services. These insights will be useful for any company in the health care industry considering social media.

In the last case “Health Care Reform Requires Rethinking the IT Strategy,” Mr. Vo and Dr. Bhaskar present a case study where the CEO is anticipating changes in strategy to address requirements of the new laws passed in the last 16 years. In anticipating the marketplace

established by these laws, a company anticipates to overhaul their information systems. The management of the company knows that they are running against the clock when the law is in full effect, they must be ready to address new challenges outside. They are aware of the challenges they will face while preparing for the new market reality. The case describes the challenges and is written in a way that encourages readers to think of possible Information Technology based solutions.

It is my sincere hope that these case studies will give the readers a real world perspective of Information Technology and its influence on the health care industry. The cases included in this special issues show that a true health care reform is at last possible because Information Technology is there to support the health care organizations.

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