



News Release

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Contact: Macon Morehouse (202-724-3303; mmorehouse@aap.org)

PEDIATRICIANS FACE BARRIERS TO HEALTH IT

American Academy of Pediatrics: Congress needs to address cost, privacy issues and children's unique health-care needs

Washington, D.C.—High costs, adolescent privacy issues and the unique health-care needs of children are making it more challenging for pediatricians, compared to other physicians, to move to electronic health records, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

AAP supports the move to electronic health records because it will help pediatricians be more effective and efficient, ultimately improving the health of children. But in testimony before the House Small Business Committee today, Edward Gotlieb, MD, FAAP, a practicing pediatrician from Stone Mountain, Georgia, urged members to “please keep in mind the special needs of children,” and explained the unique difficulties pediatricians face, including:

- How to pay for health IT systems: Medicare includes financial incentives to encourage doctors to move to electronic health systems, but Medicaid—which provides health care coverage for 30 million children—does not, excluding pediatricians. If that is not remedied, “the inequitable system of funding and programs for children in comparison to adults will only be bolstered,” Gotlieb said. “That is not a good investment in our future.”
- How to track pediatric care: Much of the care provided for children, such as immunizations, growth tracking and medication dosing, is unique to children. But many health IT systems do not include so-called “pediatric functions.” “Child health care providers often find that clinic information systems have limited usefulness in pediatrics because they seem to be designed for adult care,” Gotlieb said.
- How to protect adolescent privacy: Under HIPAA [the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act], state law determines when adolescent health records can be shared with, or kept from, parents. Disclosure laws vary from state to state when it comes to age of consent, type of medical problem and how mental health issues are handled. “EHR [electronic health record] systems should support privacy policies that vary by age and according to presenting problem and diagnosis, and [they] should be flexible enough to handle the policies of individual practices,” Gotlieb said. They also must be flexible enough to handle privacy and consent issues surrounding foster care, adoption, and emergency situations.

AAP welcomes Congressional efforts to find ways to encourage the adoption of electronic health records and will work to ensure that the opportunity is available for all physicians and their patients.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.