



We hear daily about the proposed changes and impacts to healthcare as a result of the HITECH Act of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The ultimate goal remains to improve quality, safety and efficiency of care for all patients. We seek greater engagement of patients and their families in their overall health including prevention and wellness as well as care and treatment. Greater coordination of care is essential to maximize efficiencies in healthcare processes and to achieve positive clinical outcomes. As we wait for the full definition and explanation of what constitutes "meaningful use" of an electronic health record it is clear that the role of nursing in the implementation and adoption of IT has never been greater.

Nurses are at the core of the health system and as such are the main point of contact with the patient, family and other care providers. It is nurses that gather clinically relevant information, assess and document past medical history and on going assessments, plan for the care of treatment of patients as well as coordinate and monitor that care to meet identified goals. This work extends beyond the acute care setting into the community and through it all the nurse serves as glue that ties it all together. As our nation looks to health information technology as a tool to support care delivery, ensure more efficient processes and the achievement of positive outcomes it is nurses that will be at the forefront. As "meaningful use" is defined we will see nurses supporting the healthcare system by further accelerating their efforts to implement technology to support documentation that will be critical to meeting the requirements outlined to achieve the HIT stimulus payouts. As requirements specific to the national initiative become clearer the role of nursing can be expected to expand. This is an exciting time to be a nurse and I encourage all of you that are involved in health information technology to continue your efforts knowing that you play a pivotal role in helping to re-shape the landscape of healthcare for all Americans.

Siemens is actively committed to the HITECH initiative by contributing to the work of defining "meaningful use", participating in workgroups and in partnering with our customers to assist them as they prepare to assess their EHR readiness and focus on their meaningful use roadmaps. I am excited to see nursing taking on such an active role in these efforts and know that our contribution will be recognized as a major success factor in the highly anticipated transformation of healthcare!

Best wishes for continued success in all you do!

Gail Latimer, RN, MSN, FACHE
Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer