DHIN Data and the Greater Good

Jan Lee, MD, CEO, Delaware Health Information Network

*In May of 2007, Delaware launched the first statewide health information exchange in the country, the Delaware Health Information Network (DHIN). Nearly eight years later, independent resources and evaluations confirm that, through DHIN, Delaware is improving the health of Delawareans, improving the patient experience of care and reducing health care costs.*

As a physician serving with the U.S. Air Force, I spent much of my career moving from base to base and country to country. Before the days of the Internet, smart phones or the cloud, my personal medical record traveled with me as a paper record. To this day, I’m amazed by the military’s ability to keep simple paper files intact for nearly a quarter-century, following me – and hundreds of thousands of service men and women – across oceans and continents.

Data sharing has come a long way since those days, when the exchange of information meant just that – handing a medical record from one medical provider to another.

Today’s information sharing is quicker, easier and more effective. Through health information exchanges like DHIN, patient information is available in real-time – no more searching through paper files for a misplaced chart, or waiting for a returned phone call with lab results.

The value of today’s information exchange is in its immediacy: Data empowers health care teams to make decisions, order tests and prescribe the treatments patients need, saving time, money and lives in the process.

Since its beginnings as a public-private partnership established by the Delaware General Assembly, DHIN has created value for the thousands of providers who
access the Community Health Record each day. Providers save time not chasing down records; data senders save money by submitting results only once; and physicians save lives through immediate access to the patient data necessary to make medical decisions.

An independent review by health information exchange (HIE) evaluator Maestro Strategies monetizes this value, calculating that DHIN:

- Saved data senders nearly $7 million delivering results to enrolled providers in 2013 alone
- Saved enrolled practices a collective $885,000 in electronic health record interface implementation
- Saves insurance companies and consumers $10 million annually in the reduction of duplicate radiology and lab tests

The reduction in duplicative tests is especially significant in today’s “waste not, want not” health care environment. A recent study in Health Data Management found that the use of an HIE cut redundant tests by 25% in just ninety days! (What a help an HIE would’ve been to this physician, stationed at an overseas base, searching after-hours for test results in a chart locked in another doc’s desk!)

As the nation’s most mature statewide health information exchange, DHIN is proud to serve all of Delaware’s acute care hospitals and long-term care and skilled nursing facilities, along with nearly 100% of ordering medical providers.

With more than 14,000,000 clinical results and reports posted on DHIN each year, the total unique patient records in the system now exceed 1.9 million and hail from all 50 states.

This track record of success has positioned DHIN as a national leader in health information exchanges - one of only a few public HIEs proven to be fully sustaining (Stage 6 of 7 on the eHealth Initiative HIE Maturity Model) and now innovating to provide value-add services (Stage 7 on the HIE Maturity Model).

From its primary roles as a post office, delivering results, and library, storing medical results and information in the Community Health Record, DHIN is evolving into an ecosystem, focused on the collective good. Specifically, DHIN exists to:
Create, operate and maintain a health information ecosystem for the greater social good in which all participants both contribute and receive value.

In this always evolving and improving ecosystem, data and improved access to data will continue to be the currency for health care’s stakeholders. Soon enrolled physicians and providers will have access to aggregated data at the cohort level – something that was previously too time- and labor-intensive to compile – to use for population analysis and predictive modeling. By identifying patients who are at the greatest risk and allowing their medical teams to be more proactive, we’ll see a reduction in costly hospital readmissions and lapses in care.

Consumers, too, will benefit from this health information ecosystem, as DHIN will help connect them with their medical information and provide convenient ways for them to communicate safely and securely with their medical providers.

And for society, DHIN’s health information ecosystem will continue to provide perhaps the greatest value of all: Facilitating better communication to achieve better health outcomes for Delawareans.

Jan Lee, MD, is Chief Executive Officer for the Delaware Health Information Network (DHIN). A board-certified Family Practice physician, with a Master’s degree in Medical Management, Dr. Lee previously held leadership roles with the United States Air Force, most recently leading implementation of the Department of Defense electronic health record.