

News Release

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HHS Issues First Department-Wide Report on Personalized Health Care

Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt today released the first department-wide report on the goal of personalized health care and said work in **biomedical science**, health information technology and health care delivery should be aligned to produce **"the right treatment, at the right time"** for each individual patient.

The report, *Personalized Health Care: Opportunities, Pathways, Resources*, presents a **long-range plan** for achieving much more individualized treatment for patients, especially by using genetic information and health information technology (IT). Together, health information and IT can give clinicians better information about each patient and more support in choosing **"best care"** options for treatment.

"Health care professionals have always aimed at making medical care as individualized as possible. But in truth, our ability to deliver the right care for each person has been limited," Secretary Leavitt writes in a foreword to the report.

The report was produced as part of Secretary Leavitt's priority initiative on personalized health care. It describes how the exploding knowledge of the human genome will increase the capacity to predict, detect, preempt and treat disease, by enabling physicians to "look beneath" visible symptoms and see signs and causes of disease at the molecular level. The report also describes how health IT can make patient information accessible securely, while maintaining confidentiality, as well as how it can support high quality care. Health IT can even help clinicians and researchers ascertain which treatments are most effective and for whom, by using broad-scale data derived from day-to-day medical practice.

The report includes descriptions of the opportunities presented by science and technology. It also outlines pathways where work is needed. The report presents the first inventory of some 50 related programs underway throughout HHS.

Secretary Leavitt said the combination of genomic medicine, health IT, and better use of medical evidence will make possible much more effective health care -- such as learning which medicines, at what dosages, work best for which patients.

"Personalized health care means knowing what works, knowing why it works, knowing who it works for, and applying that knowledge for patients," he writes. "These goals may sound elementary, but a generation of effort lies ahead of us in achieving them."

Secretary Leavitt emphasized that personalized medicine, especially the use of genomic data, will require further attention to using information correctly, including protecting the privacy of identifiable personal health information and protection against misuse of that information. The Secretary also noted that the Bush Administration, since 2001, has supported enactment of federal law to protect against misuse of genomic information in employment and health insurance.

Some highlights of related activities in HHS include:

- Genome-wide Association Studies, sponsored especially by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), to identify genetic elements in disease. New findings from these studies are now being reported at a rapidly accelerating pace.
- Efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to describe population-wide genomic characteristics and to help lay the groundwork for using genomic elements in health care.

- Programs under the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to improve understanding of the causes of cancer and to improve treatment through scientific advancement as well as new programs for sharing “best treatment” information.
- HHS-supported efforts in health IT to develop technical standards and provide for secure exchange of medical data, aimed at supporting the President’s goal of electronic health records for most Americans by 2014.
- New guidance and planning by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to lay the groundwork for rapid development of useful new products, and for integrating genomic information into drug prescribing and disease diagnosis.
- Efforts by NIH, CDC, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) to accelerate the translation of scientific discoveries and “best practice” information into clinical practice.

The report is available on the HHS Web site at <http://www.hhs.gov/myhealthcare/>.

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Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.

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