

Dear Inquiry Committee

Though I'm aware some people have a fairly negative opinion regarding a proposed e-health recording system, according to this New York Times item today apparently e-health systems can, and do, work quite well at least according to the item. For eg, Epic appear to have an especially patient-centered approach that seems fine & 40 million patient records.

Digitizing Health Records .. (snip)

By MILT FREUDENHEIM [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) Jan 14, 2012

THE push to move the nation from paper to electronic health records is serious business .. (One example being, Epic): <http://www.epic.com>

"Patients do more with Epic: Millions of patients access their records via MyChart - literally the same chart used by their doctors. Patients can schedule appointments, get test results and print growth charts. Epic's freestanding personal health record, Lucy, completes the circle, with an interoperable health diary that can plug into MyChart - or disconnect from it and inform care wherever the patient receives it."

Epic supplies software, systems, training and support so its customers can manage their data. As far as the general public is concerned, it operates far under the radar. Yet it helps keep track of 40 million patients ..

Epic is no newcomer. Judith Faulkner, the chief executive, started the company more than 30 years ago, when, in all but a very few places, patient records were kept on paper. As such, she has a long-term view of the nation's struggle to digitize medical records.

"We have all sorts of firewalls and security systems in effect to prevent data breaches," Ms. Faulkner says. On laptops used by doctors, files can be viewed but not stored. The same is true for smartphones and tablets. "We do not store patient data on them," she says, so it cannot be misused if these devices are stolen.

All told, Epic says, its systems will cover 127 million patients with active electronic health records by July 2013. It now has 5,100 employees and it plans to hire 1,000 more people this year.

The Epic software system is a "de facto standard among the more complex academic health centers and multispecialty medical groups," says Dr. John D. Halamka, chief information officer of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and a professor at the Harvard Medical School.

As a privately held, employee-owned company, Epic does not issue profit statements. Its revenue for 2011 is expected to come in at nearly \$1.2 billion, a 45 percent increase over the previous year, the company says.

The federal government is contributing to the recent growth of Epic and similar firms by offering financial incentives to health providers who switch to electronic records. It sees these records as a way to improve patient care and reduce inappropriate costs like those for duplicated tests.

Nearly 40 percent of American primary care doctors and about 25 percent of hospitals use electronic patient records. Thousands more are expected to adopt them this year to qualify for financial help under the 2009 federal stimulus package.

About 250,000 doctors use Epic's system, and "they give us a lot of feedback on design," she says. "I haven't seen an expert group that does better. Typically the wisdom of the crowd is better than direction from a small group."

Ms. Faulkner has made it a point to offer a "cool" workplace even though her company is distant from Pacific beaches or Manhattan towers. The Epic campus has 15 acres of solar electric panels, thousands of geothermal wells for heating, and crops that are harvested for biomass fuel.

> The Senate inquiry into the proposed PCEHR (the Personally Controlled  
> E-Health Record) program has started. This nationwide PCEHR system is  
> slated to launch July 1st. The first public submissions have now been  
> published on the Community Affairs committee website. Congratulations  
> to the Australian Privacy Foundation for their cogent & comprehensive  
> submission. Hopefully, there will be more submissions in the next few  
> weeks ahead of public hearings in early February..  
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>[http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac\\_ctte/pers\\_cont\\_elect\\_health\\_r  
ec\\_11/submissions.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/pers_cont_elect_health_r<br/>ec_11/submissions.htm)  
>  
> "Personally Controlled Electronic Health Records Bill 2011 & one  
> related bill"  
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> Submissions received by the Committee  
>  
> 1 National Rural Health Alliance (PDF 56KB)  
> 2 National E-Health Transition Authority (PDF 750KB)  
> 3 Associate Professor Terry Hannan (PDF 1286KB)  
> 4 CSC Healthcare (PDF 517KB)  
> 5 HealthLink Ltd (PDF 674KB)  
> 6 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (PDF  
> 113KB)  
> 7 Consumers Health Forum of Australia (PDF 1577KB)  
> 8 Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (PDF 109KB)  
> 9 Bupa Health Dialog (PDF 557KB)  
> 10 Australian Privacy Foundation (PDF 217KB)  
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> For further information, contact:  
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> Committee Secretary  
> Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
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