

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

The AMA Chimes in on Health IT

Madara outlines the AMA's plans to help physicians with the onset of changes.

Today's physicians are inundated with regulations and rules as well as a steady stream of changes, many of which affect the digital side of medicine. From EHRs meant to help coordinate care to CMS rules designed to protect patients, many initiatives and products have the best intentions of improving healthcare but often hinder it.

AMA Focus: One of the hot topics at this year's American Medical Association (AMA) Annual Meeting in Chicago was the discussion of the barrage of less-than-stellar emerging technologies juxtaposed with up-and-coming MACRA mandates.

Quality products on the health IT side have been lacking for a variety of reasons, often making the practice of medicine less efficient and effective while the promise of interoperability seems just out of reach, suggested **James L. Madara, MD**, executive vice president and CEO of the AMA in his address at the Annual Meeting on June 11.

"Even those digital products that might be helpful often lack a way of enriching the relationship between the physician and the patient," said Madara. "It's like trying to squeeze a 10-gallon product idea into a 2-gallon healthcare knowledge base."

In an effort to help doctors with these transitions, Madara mentioned four things that the AMA has in mind to combat confusion in what he calls healthcare's "digital dystopia."

Tackling Trending Topics

The AMA's CEO's first order of business is to ensure that "manufacturers" of future healthcare software and products understand what physicians both want and need. He says that the AMA wants "digital tools that would simplify and better organize" providers' lives, and that would adapt to the nuances and specialties of the myriad of practices out there.

His second and third enterprises for the future of health IT include the AMA's work with "MATTER, a Chicago-based incubator for emerging healthcare companies" and an "innovation studio in Silicon Valley" named Health 2047 in reference to the AMA's celebration of its 200th birthday in that calendar year. MATTER works with over 120 companies on developing technologies that fit the specific needs of physicians. Health 2047 is more of an AMA think tank currently studying ways to improve this flawed system.

Online resource: Madara touched lastly on the AMA's "Steps Forward" program available to providers online. Steps Forward offers physician-centric tools to better navigate the digital overload that oftentimes gets in the way of patient care. The modules have already been utilized by more than 70,000 users since their introduction at last year's annual meeting. The constantly-evolving resource has also benefited from an AMA crowd-sourcing effort that focused on the "pain points highlighted by physicians."

"New modules are being produced and tested, and CMS has recognized these as a form by which physicians can be acknowledged for practice improvement, under the MACRA law," said Madara. "These AMA Steps Forward modules have, in just the last few months, received more than five national awards in the digital product area."

Final Thoughts

Madara's final comments promoted the importance of provider input in the future of health IT. He touched on the fact that the relationship between physician and patient is "transactional" in nature, and because of that, the onus is on providers to ensure the products being produced are effective.

Resource: For the complete transcript of Dr. Madara's address to the AMA 2016 Annual Meeting, visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/speeches/2016-06-11-madara-annual-address.page>.

For a quick link to the AMA's Steps Forward modules, visit <https://www.stepsforward.org>.