

Health Information Compliance Alert

HHS, CAP WORK TO STANDARDIZE

Standardization is the name of the game for the **Department of Health and Human Services**, according to two HHS announcements made earlier this month at the 2003 National Health Information Infrastructure conference in Washington.

HHS Secretary **Tommy Thompson** July 1 announced that HHS and the **College of American Pathologists** agreed to license CAP's standardized medical vocabulary system, SNOMED CT (Systemized Nomenclature of Medicine Clinical Terms), free of charge. In addition, Thompson declared that he has charged the **Institute of Medicine** to create a standardized model of an electronic health care record.

HHS says it views establishing a common medical language as a key component of its goal to create a national unified electronic medical records system. CAP's vocabulary system, which includes about 340,000 medical concepts, has been recognized as the world's most comprehensive clinical terminology database available, HHS said in a release.

"The licensing agreement with the CAP will make it possible for health care providers, hospitals, insurance companies, public health departments, medical research facilities and others to easily incorporate this uniform terminology system into their information systems."

As for HHS' agreement with the Institute of Medicine, Thompson said "the health care standards development organization known as HL7 has been asked to evaluate the model once it has been designed." Additionally, Thompson said HHS will share the standardized model record free of charge with all components of the U.S. health care system, and said he expects HHS to have a model record ready sometime in 2004.

To read the HHS release, go to www.hhs.gov/news/press/2003pres/20030701.html.