ADA: Interoperability the wave of the future

Two 2020 rules implement patient access provisions of 21st Century Cures Act

BY DAVID BURGER

The ADA is well-positioned to be a leader in advancing interoperability on the heels of federal regulations published earlier this year, according to the ADA Standards Committee on Dental Informatics, in an effort to improve care through information exchange.

Two rules, issued by the U.S. Health and Human Services Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, implement interoperability and patient access provisions of the 21st Century Cures Act.

The act, passed by Congress in 2016, aims to foster innovation and problem solving in health care and attempts to remove many of the barriers to information exchange that existed at the time. It encourages electronic information exchange between providers, payers, consumers, and others for the sake of improving care, reducing costs and empowering consumers. The two regulations authorized by the act prohibit information blocking practices and name mature, well-developed interoperability standards for the digital exchange of health information.

"These rules do not have much immediate impact on dentistry, but dentistry and its leaders are thinking ahead to the time when regulators, consumers and payers begin pressuring them to adopt newer, more interoperable technologies that support information exchange," said Dr. Gregory Zeller, past chair of the ADA Standards Committee on Dental Informatics and current chair of the committee's subcommittee on clinical informatics.

tronic health information exchange. HL7 is a nonprofit standards development organization dedicated to providing standards and solutions that empower global health data interoperability. Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources is another newer HL7 standard for exchanging digital health care information.

Dentists and dental practices should recognize this as an opportunity to coordinate care, reduce errors, improve care quality and

Dr. Zeller

increase patient satisfaction, Dr. Zeller said. Other players, including dental technology vendors, payers and regulators, interested in the electronic exchange of data necessary to support value-based payment models are also interested in development of these standards, which will eventually shape what payers, providers and consumers are able to exchange seamlessly.

The ADA Standards Committee on Dental Informatics develops informatics standards and technical reports to assist the dental profession with hardware and software selection, digital photography, interoperability, data security and more. ■

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"ADA standards no. 1079 and 1084 are dental data content standards from the ADA Standards Committee on Dental Informatics whose development into Health Level Seven International's Clinical Document Architecture and Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources implementation guides is going to help dentists share information with each other, with their medical colleagues, with payers and with their patients," he added.

The Consolidated Clinical Document Architecture is HL7's primary standard for representing structured clinical patient documentation for the purposes of elec-