

# Information Exchange and Interoperability –Top Priorities in 2014

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For those not familiar with the ONC, it is the division of Health and Human Services tasked with the coordination of nationwide efforts to implement and use health information technology and the electronic exchange of health information. DeSalvo assumed her new role as head of the ONC in January and had previously served as the Health Commissioner for the city of New Orleans.

In late February, DeSalvo was among the keynote speakers at the annual [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society \(HIMSS\) Conference](#) in Orlando. During her speech, DeSalvo outlined her goals for the ONC, including widespread health information exchange over the course of the next three years. “The nation’s health care data will be freed,” announced DeSalvo.

In keeping with this commitment, DeSalvo highlighted five areas of focus for promoting interoperability, a key driver of information exchange. They include end-user adoption of electronic health records (EHR), establishing cohesive standards across the board, incentivizing the marketplace, ensuring personal health records remain private and secure and establishing a proper governance and structure of health information exchange balanced with equity in the system.

Citing the progress made in the adoption of EHR, DeSalvo noted that more can still be done, and that getting there will be a “complex and exciting endeavor.”

Lack of industry standardization makes it difficult for providers and patients to share necessary information. By increasing interoperability, we can move closer to a complete capture of standardized health care data, allowing for a more comprehensive health care system in which patients, primary care providers, specialists and entire hospital systems can interact in a smooth and streamlined fashion.

As the ONC advances towards its goals, it is important to encourage health care providers to adopt and continue use of EHR to help prepare for and facilitate the shift towards streamlining health information exchange.

As these systems become increasingly interoperable, the sharing of information will flourish and health care systems in the U.S. will better serve each individual.

What do you think about the shift towards an interoperable health system? Tweet @CNSICorp to let us know! Follow CNSI on [Twitter](#).