

Health IT initiatives top HIMSS agenda

By Matt Gross

Former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee gave a keynote speech at this year's Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, which boasted 28,000 registered participants from across the health and life sciences industry.

Other speakers included Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services; Robert Kolodner, National Coordinator on Health Information Technology; Steve Case, CEO of Revolution; and Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google. They focused on initiatives stemming from the public sector and how private industry is responding.

Government view

The view from the government and its sponsored organizations, such as the American Health Information Community (AHIC) and the Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP), showed continued progress towards pushing demonstrable health information technology initiatives.

Those initiatives include the Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN 2) and a continued focus on harmonizing standards and certification. One of the key initiatives for 2008 is to establish a successor to the American Health Information Community that moves this organization from a government advisory group to a public-private organization – an initiative that SAS has been involved with.

Since AHIC 2 will initiate or review most of the top-level health information technology initiatives, it is important that the new AHIC has the right framework, governance and sustainability model to insure strong and consistent oversight of these initiatives.

Private sector view

The view from the private sector keynote speakers emphasized the need to focus on the individual consumer of these industries.

Revolution is encouraging companies to create consumer-focused tools and services that allow individuals to become more involved with their health information. Google recently announced its Google Health initiative in partnership with the Cleveland Clinic, creating a consumer-controlled personal health record that health-related companies can deposit or access health information based on the consumer's preferences.

The trend toward consumer engagement and empowerment started a couple of years ago and appears to be gaining traction with support of these large companies as well as Microsoft's HealthVault.

The BI view

Relevant to SAS and others focused on business intelligence, HIMSS highlighted the movement from the use of electronic tools in health and life sciences for data capture and automation to a growing need to better understand and use the information to help improve patient well-being and efficiency as well as to identify new opportunities to advance healthcare.

BI in these industries is still in the early stages, which creates product and service opportunities for SAS.

The trend within healthcare continues to be on better understanding and growing electronic data. SAS remains committed to working with our customers and the market to develop tools and solutions to achieve those goals. With our experience in analytics and BI, our proven track record of delivering high-quality products, and our existing large footprint both in and out of the healthcare space, SAS is well positioned to be a major player in the market.

BIO – *Matt Gross is a SAS Product Manager*