

Healthcare IT News

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Despite HIPAA deadline for security, errant outbound e-mails continue at many hospitals. **PAGE 35**

ONCHIT publishes RFP for infohighway

BY CAROLINE BRODER, Senior editor

WASHINGTON — The federal government is poised to issue a request for proposals to develop a prototype for a nationwide health information network architecture.

According to a government Web site, the Department of Health and Human Services will award up to six, one-year contracts for vendors to develop and evaluate a prototype "Nationwide Health Information Network Architecture."

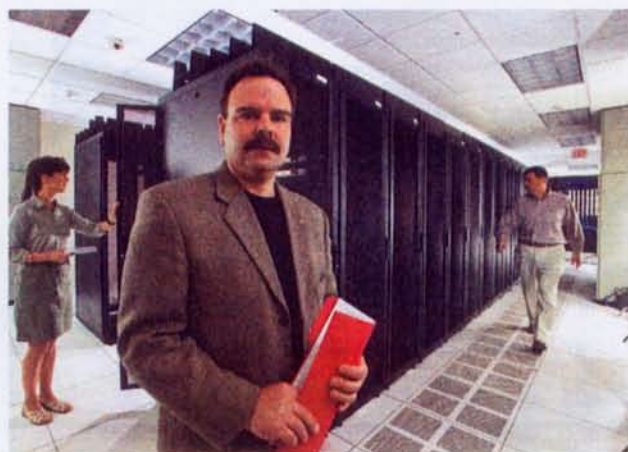
The government also plans to assess state laws and business policies on privacy and security that hamper health information exchange, develop and test certifica-



HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt.

tion of electronic health records and create a process to harmonize standards in healthcare software applications.

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology will soon release a summary of RFP see page 35



Concord Hospital CTO Gary Light in front of his bigger, better data center.

Concord Hospital adds data muscle

New data centers sell scalability to growing hospitals.

BY BERNIE MONEGAIN, Managing editor

CONCORD, N.H. — Concord Hospital, a 205-bed facility that serves people throughout New Hampshire, no longer has to worry about pushing its data center beyond its limits.

The hospital just built a new, bigger and more powerful center just down the hall from its old one.

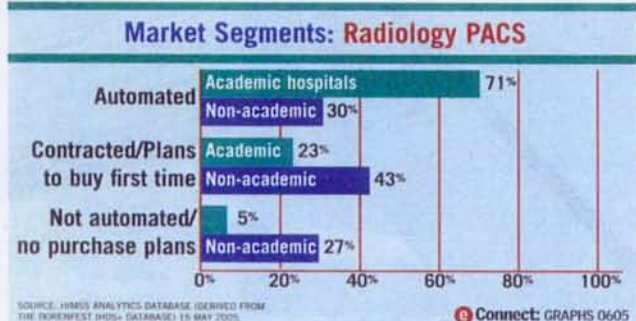
Some on the IT staff figure it's done in the nick of time, as more and more digital systems were being added to the hospital and doctors and nurses had come to rely more than ever on round-the-clock access to the increasing amount of patient data. Plus the demand on the network was likely to grow even more once a new patient wing and emergency department now in the

works is completed.

"Even more important is our business continuity plan," said Gary Light, the hospital's chief technology officer. "The airflow wasn't optimal," he said. "The power wasn't optimal. We had some cooling issues."

The hospital's legacy UPS (uninterruptible power supply) system was 15 years old. It was showing wear and tear, and it was at capacity.

"We did have some scares, and it was mostly due to cooling," Light said. So when the hospital moved its data center from an 800 square-foot space to a 2,500 square-foot one, Light and his crew made sure the room was designed according to best practices. Concord Hospital turned to West Kingston, R.I.-based American Power Conversion's InfraStruXure to maintain uninterrupted availability **UPS** see page 12



CMS seeks to recover Medicare overpayments

Auditors use IT to ID and collect funds.

BY PATTY ENRADO, Contributing editor

WASHINGTON — The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has awarded three-year contracts to recovery audit contractors to identify and collect overpayments.

The demonstration projects were mandated by Congress, which is interested in pursuing whatever methods will correct the issue of Medicare overpayments.

The demonstration projects began in May in California, Florida and New York, said Barbara

Cebuhar, a CMS spokeswoman. "CMS is trying to be a more prudent administrator of the Medicare trust fund," she said.

While inappropriate payments are not necessarily a major problem for CMS, the agency has been looking into areas where "there has been a pattern," she said.

The recovery audit contractors, chosen via RFP, will receive three years' worth of files and use that data to begin contacting people.

The contractors are Diversified Collection Services, Livermore, Calif.; Public Consulting Group, Boston; HealthData Insights, Las Vegas; Connelly Consulting Associates, Wilton, Conn.; and PRG-Shultz International, Atlanta.

CMS see page 27

Tech's role cited in effort to create performance measures

BY BERNIE MONEGAIN, Managing editor

WITH THE UNVEILING LAST MONTH of what it called a "starter set" of 26 quality performance measures, the Ambulatory Care Quality Alliance is pushing forward initiatives to pay physicians based on their performance.

Implied in the pay-for-performance push is the adoption of information technology by physicians.

"We did discuss the role of IT and believe that, by promoting the starter set of measures, we will be promoting the use of IT," said Nancy Wilson, MD, senior adviser on quality improvement to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.



Nancy Wilson, MD

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of its most critical IT applications.

Light particularly commends APC for its modular approach, which meant Concord Hospital could plan for future growth without having to power up for more use than it needed today.


It is InfraStrucXure's scalability and modular features that appeal to other hospitals, too, said John Donovan, director of APC's global healthcare segment. "The average data center uses 30 percent of its capacity," he said.

Greenwich Hospital, a 174-bed hospital in Connecticut, like Concord Hospital, is among the top 100 most-wired hospitals in the country. It rolled out InfraStruXure in February to cool its blade servers in its new data center.

"InfraStruXure also allows us to scale our IT systems to meet future demands," said James Weeks, CIO for Greenwich Hospital.

That translates into cost savings, said Light. While APC was not less expensive than other systems Light and his team considered, its modular approach saves the hospital money on expensive service contracts and on batteries and hardware it would have purchased for a system that was not build-as-you-grow. ■

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