



## **New Legislation Impacts the Growth of Electronic Health Records**

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act) was signed into law on February 17, 2009. In part, its purpose was to stimulate the adoption of electronic health records (EHR) and other related technology. Starting in 2011, healthcare providers were offered financial incentives for demonstrating meaningful use of EHR. The "carrot" is \$27 billion in incentives. Providers have until 2015 to demonstrate achievement of meaningful use of these records. After 2015, penalties may be imposed for failure to demonstrate such use.

This "carrot and stick" approach creates a powerful incentive for healthcare providers to get on board with EHR use in a timely manner. From the largest employers in the healthcare field to insurance companies to your local dentist's office, every healthcare provider must be prepared to meet the first phase of the HITECH Act.

The second phase of the HITECH Act refers to the meaningful use aspect. Organizations will be required to pull information into cohesive reporting formats that can be used to monitor and improve the quality of care.

Health information management professionals will be key to meeting the meaningful use requirement. Meaningful use goes far beyond coding and storing healthcare information. The next generation of healthcare managers must know how to apply medical records across multiple technology platforms for a diverse group of providers, clinics, insurance companies, federal agencies and more, in order to deliver better care.

To be successful in such a significant undertaking, the next generation of healthcare managers will work in large teams and take a systems approach to understanding information. That's why the UW curriculum includes not only courses in medical terminology, disease, treatments and medical informatics but also leadership, management and ethical issues. The online bachelor's degree in HIMT is designed to prepare professional staff to be better team players, have a wider breadth of medical knowledge and embrace a long-term vision for sharing and exchanging information across multiple organizations to make a positive change in patients' outcomes.

The online Bachelor of Science in Health Information Management and Technology is offered by UW-Green Bay, UW-Parkside, and UW-Stevens Point. UW-La Crosse will contribute courses to the program.

*"We are producing a whole new breed of healthcare managers, professionals who can transform the industry and enhance the quality of care by making medical records more meaningful."*

*Kuang-Wei Wen, Academic Director, UW-La Crosse*

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