HITAC Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2018
Executive Summary

The 21st Century Cures Act (Cures Act) requires the Health Information Technology Advisory Committee (HITAC) to develop an annual report to be submitted to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and to Congress each fiscal year. This report complies with that directive by reviewing fiscal year 2018 (FY18) HITAC activities, describing the landscape of health information technology (IT) infrastructure priority areas (interoperability, privacy and security, patient access to information), analyzing infrastructure gaps, and offering recommendations for future HITAC activities.

HITAC Progress in FY18

The Cures Act directs the HITAC to make recommendations to the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology regarding policies, standards, implementation specifications, and certification criteria related to the implementation of a health information technology infrastructure, nationally and locally, that advances the electronic access, exchange, and use of health information.

The HITAC began its work in January 2018 and quickly submitted a policy framework to the National Coordinator for Health IT. The HITAC also charged several subcommittees with developing recommendations to support ONC's work required by the Cures Act. The subcommittees include the:

- Trusted Exchange Framework Task Force
- U.S. Core Data for Interoperability Task Force
- Interoperability Standards Priorities Task Force
- Annual Report Workgroup

Health IT Infrastructure Landscape

The Cures Act specifies three priority target areas within which the HITAC should focus its activities. These priority target areas are an organizing principle for classifying the HITAC's work and organizing this report.

Priority Target Area: Interoperability

While most health care providers now use electronic health records (EHRs), interoperability remains fragmented and uneven. Looking ahead, the Cures Act requires HHS to develop regulations in a variety of areas that will significantly impact the current interoperability landscape, such as information blocking and conditions of certification. Work is also underway to develop a trusted exchange framework and common agreement, as well as to identify priority uses of health information technology and the associated standards and implementation specifications that support such uses.

Priority Target Area: Privacy and Security

Privacy and security of health data are important considerations in advancing and maintaining trust in interoperability. Additionally, poor privacy and security practices heighten the vulnerability of patient information stored in health information systems and on devices, and may lead to events of concern to health care organizations and providers.

Priority Target Area: Patient Access to Information

Continued information and education, as well as improved accessibility and increased use of application programming interfaces (APIs), are needed to increase patient awareness of the use of data and health IT resources. Access to health IT can have a positive impact on health, health care, and health equity by supporting shared decision-making between patients and providers, providing personalized self-management tools, and delivering accurate, accessible, and actionable health information.

The HITAC did not identify a need for additional target areas as defined in the Cures Act in FY18. The HITAC will revisit this consideration in the FY19 annual report.

Health IT Infrastructure Gaps, Opportunities, and Recommendations

The Cures Act requires an analysis identifying existing gaps in policies and resources for achieving the ONC FY18 objectives and benchmarks and furthering interoperability throughout the health information technology infrastructure, as well as recommendations for addressing the gaps identified. The HITAC has focused on the following key gaps and opportunities for the health IT industry and has recommended related HITAC activities. ONC has indicated that it will charge the HITAC with additional activities after the proposed regulation for implementation of the health IT provisions of the Cures Act is published, particularly for the Interoperability Priority Target Area.

The following chart summarizes the HITAC's assessment:

Key Gaps	Key Opportunities	Recommended HITAC Activities
Priority Target Area: Interoperability		
Need to increase level of interoperability	Address "reality gap" between the perception of what has been certified for a system and what is truly interoperable in the field	Further measure whether systems are truly interoperable at both content and transport levels after implementation, especially among smaller practices and by patients
Priority Target Area: Privacy and Security		
Implications of emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT)	Consider appropriate polices for the IoT	Identify areas of IoT use that would benefit from guidance and examples of success in the health care industry
Lack of user awareness and education about privacy and security protections	Offer support for and education of technology users regarding privacy and security protections, including for health and other information shared on social media	Identify educational approaches, technological mitigators, and potential regulatory solutions that offer improved privacy and security protections
Variability of information sharing policies across states	Increased uniformity of information sharing policies across states	Consider federal role in setting guidelines for the exchange of data across states
Variability in adoption of cybersecurity framework(s)	Offer support for widespread adoption of cybersecurity framework(s)	Consider the impact of nationwide adoption of cybersecurity framework(s) and delineate cybersecurity accountability for data by role
Lack of user control to share and disclose information	Consider options for granular levels of consent to share and disclose information	Undertake a review of emerging consent approaches and the technologies that underpin them, and make recommendations for the improvement of current consent approaches
Priority Target Area: Patient Access to Information		
Unmet infrastructure needs for underserved populations	Support infrastructure needs for underserved populations, including exchange costs, the prevalence of electronic equipment, Internet access, pharmacy services, and use of telehealth services	Measure impact of monetization of data exchange
Accessibility and usability of patient portals and other patient-facing technology continue to need improvement	Consider improvements to accessibility and usability of patient portals and other patient-facing technology	Measure amount/length of time a portal has been online working properly, patient engagement, and/or patient understanding and use of data
Patient awareness and education about health IT resources	Encourage patient and caregiver education about health IT resources	Identify use cases demonstrating the value of patient's data to the patient