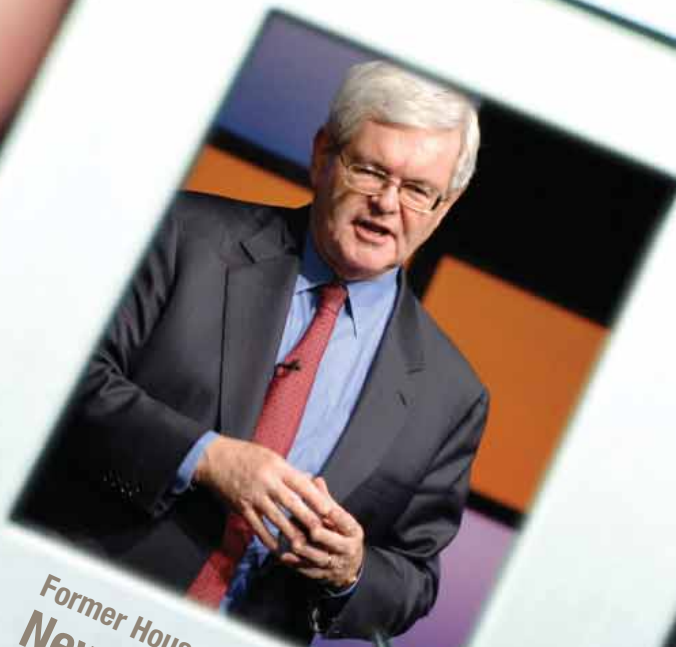


Data solutions: CHANGING THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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Former House Speaker
Newt Gingrich
encourages healthcare
providers to embrace
technology and
transform the way they
use information, for their
benefit and for patients.



SAS pioneers support for CDISC standards to access EHR data

In its own quest to help life sciences companies lead the technological charge into 21st-century practices, SAS has expanded its efforts to support Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium standards. CDISC is the definitive independent medical and biopharmaceutical standards organization.

SAS is helping to drive the revolution in clinical research by developing a framework for loading electronic health record (EHR) data into SAS Drug Development using CDISC standards.

By gathering clinical research data one time at the point of care, researchers can reduce data errors, save time and enable rapid clinical data availability for better, faster clinical development decisions.

“Strong and efficient interfaces that link electronic health records with the pharmaceutical industry and regulatory authorities will enhance public health by improving both therapeutic product safety and efficacy,” says Edward Helton, Chief Strategist of Regulatory and Biomedical Affairs at SAS. “This framework helps provide the transparency and unambiguous path the FDA is pursuing for all e-submissions and other required and related electronic source data.” ●

While pondering a run for the presidency, former Speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich is actively promoting what he believes are the core principles and strategies necessary to create a 21st-century intelligent health system. He founded the Center for Health Transformation in 2003 in order to accelerate the adoption of transformational solutions to help resolve issues that plague the nation’s healthcare system.

At the heart of the sea change that must take place in thought and practice is the need for medical providers to embrace the latest technologies, he says. In doing so, they will reduce errors, which in turn will save lives and reduce expenses – culminating in lower healthcare costs that will make health insurance more affordable for everyone, including the roughly 46 million Americans without insurance.

Gingrich took time out from a recent visit to SAS, where he was keynote speaker during May’s Healthcare and Life Sciences Executive Conference, to expand on his ideas.

Why don’t we start with you telling us about the Center for Healthcare Transformation and your vision of it as an agent for change in the US healthcare system?

Newt Gingrich: The Center for Health Transformation is dedicated to creating a 21st-century intelligent health system designed to save both lives and money. We believe that with all the modern technologies we have, we can help people live longer, better lives with less need for hospital stays. People would be healthier, and it’s less expensive because good health is the least expensive healthcare you can have. And so we’re looking at redesigning the whole system to make it possible for people to live the longest life possible – living independently and being active and healthy as they age.

What kind of technology are you talking about?

Gingrich: The Institute of Medicine estimates that nearly 8,000 Americans are killed every year from medication errors. Another 44,000 to 98,000 are killed each year from hospital errors. The Institute of Medicine argues that electronic health records are essential in reducing these kinds of errors and saving lives. Think of your automatic teller machine card: You punch in a four-number code, and worldwide it finds your bank, your account and verifies who you are. We want that kind of technology in health so wherever you are, you’re able to get care immediately with accurate information. And if you have a chronic condition like diabetes, heart disease, asthma or arthritis, we want you to have a record you can pull up on a screen so you can see what you need to be doing, whether or not you’ve been doing it correctly, and what your problems are in managing your own health.

How many hospitals are already thinking this way?

Gingrich: Probably 30 percent of US hospitals have made significant investments in this health information technology. Only 10 to 15 percent of physicians have done so. But the number is growing every year. And it’s growing in part because the rest of the world – virtually every sector of society – has embraced technology. It’s part of our culture. Nearly everybody you know has a cell phone with a camera. Many of them have BlackBerrys or some similar device. Most of them have laptop computers. We’re moving into a world where to not have this kind electronic information would be like having a hospital that still had a horse and buggy for an ambulance.

Can you share an example of a provider that has implemented a paperless program?

Gingrich: Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta went to a system in which doctors entered medication orders electronically, which – combined with a quality program – reduced medication errors by 93 percent. They were stunned by how much money they saved and how much better off patients were.



“We’re talking about the use of information so that you know what the best practices are, you’re able to find new scientific breakthroughs and information, and you can help people manage their own lives.”

– Newt Gingrich, Founder, The Center for Health Transformation

How long will it take to get this sort of technology into more hospitals?

Gingrich: It will ultimately be a five- to 10-year migration. During that time, you’ll see a dramatic change in the health system such that it becomes more centered on you and keeping you healthy through early testing and early wellness programs. It will include systems to support you if you have a chronic condition. We’re already seeing this work with cancer patients. Today, more people survive cancer than they did 30 years ago. It is not at all uncommon to find somebody who might have had cancer 30 or 40 years ago who’s been cancer-free ever since.

What is today’s biggest healthcare challenge?

Gingrich: The biggest challenge we face is surfacing price and quality information so that every American has access to that information before making healthcare decisions. You can’t have true consumer empowerment or a functioning marketplace without information on price and performance.

Your ideas call for new ways of thinking. What sort of cultural changes do you foresee?

Gingrich: We’re talking about the use of information so that you know what the best practices are, so that you’re able to find new scientific breakthroughs and new information, and so that you can help people manage their own lives. Say you have diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis: You’re going to have to manage yourself for the rest of your life. And to the degree that we can give you tools that help you, you can make a dramatic improvement. For example, the supermarket chain Safeway now has a program where you can go online and check everything you bought for the last 90 days. Then you can indicate what your condition is and see healthier substitutes for products you normally buy. That’s an example of the kind of new information-rich system we believe is going to be developed.

Much of what you talk about focuses on getting information to stakeholders, including patients. Why do you think price and quality information have not been available to consumers before?

Gingrich: Historically, healthcare has been a hidden industry. The insurance company negotiated a deal with the hospital on behalf of businesses that were providing health insurance for their employees. But if you think of the airline industry, you can go to Travelocity, Expedia or Orbitz, and get information about times, prices, seats, you name it. Over the next five to eight years, you’ll see that kind of migration in health. It’s already taking place in Florida. The state operates a Web site, **FloridaCompareCare.gov**, in which every hospital in Florida lists its prices, quality information and the frequency with which it performs certain procedures. And then there’s **MyFloridaRx.com**: You enter a Florida ZIP code and the medicine you want to buy, and it will give you a list of every local drugstore arranged from least expensive to most expensive. It’s having a profound impact on pricing. ■



SAS ranks high in healthcare informatics

In July, SAS was ranked No. 6 on *Healthcare Informatics*’ 14th annual “Top 100 Healthcare IT Companies” list.

The presence of SAS on the list offers further evidence that business intelligence (BI) and analytics tools are being used more frequently in the healthcare arena, and more effectively. Already widespread in the pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and life sciences areas, their use has been expanding in health insurer organizations and is becoming more mainstream among provider organizations.

Healthcare Informatics is a vital resource for more than 40,000 healthcare IT executives who require insightful coverage and commentary to stay on the cutting edge of technology. ●

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