Fundamentals of Health Information Exchange

The CCD: Continuity of Care Document

What is the CCD?

The CCD is a summary of one patient's clinical information in electronic form. At right is an example as viewed in a web browser. Only a portion is visible; the reader can view the entire document at this web URL:
http://services.bidmc.org/geekdoctor/johnhalamkaccddocument.xml

What is the purpose of the CCD?

It gives clinicians a standard way to share a comprehensive yet concise representation of a patient's medical history and current condition. Typical uses are referrals, transfers, and emergency room visits. Electronic systems that recognize the CCD format can display critical clinical information from other organizations. It is the most common way to share patient information in most health information exchanges.

Who came up with it and why should I use it?

People involved with health information technology recognized the need for a standard set of technical specifications that health information systems (such as EHR systems) could use to move key clinical information from one health care organization to another. National and international standards development organizations have had a hand in writing the CCD specification. The federal government has selected it as one of two formats required to achieve certain Meaningful Use goals.

What information does the CCD cover?

It includes the following sections, each of which contains several data elements: Advance directives; Alerts; Encounters; Family history; Functional status; Immunizations; Medical equipment; Medications; Payers; Plan of care; Problem; Procedures; Purpose; Results; Social history; Vital signs.

How do I use a CCD in my EHR system?

Many EHR systems can export a CCD; you simply click your way through a menu. What you then do with the CCD (as a file on your computer) is up to you; you might provide it to the patient on a CD or send it to another clinician, but be sure to follow security rules to encrypt the file when necessary.

Some EHR systems can import a CCD so that you can view it in the patient chart as an attachment and a few can even import the individual data values into the chart.

Some EHR systems that are connected to an HIE can retrieve CCDs from the HIE network as well as deliver CCDs to it. This assumes that a patient privacy policy is in force and that the EHR system and the HIE have established the necessary technical linkages with one another.

Should I share CCDs regarding patients with sensitive information?

You need to be able to ensure that either the CCD does not contain the sensitive information or that the patient approves of the distribution of the sensitive information to anyone who may see the CCD. Some EHR systems allow you to select the sections to include in a CCD, but even then it may be difficult to exclude the sensitive information without ending up with a nearly empty CCD. For example, lab results and medications can indirectly reveal a sensitive condition; excluding those two sections from the CCD would eliminate much useful information. Some patients may not be good candidates for the CCD.

Further reading:

- ➢ www.hl7.org
- ➢ www.ihe.net
- ➢ www.hitsp.org