As Health IT Advances, So Must Standards of Technical Excellence

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- The public is often better served when innovation and technology operate within commonly recognized criterions and levels of excellence. So, as the volume of IT services, software and products increases, so does the need to fairly determine standards and credibility.

Recognizing the prevalence of IT in health care management, the nonprofit standards development group Electronic Healthcare Network Accreditation Commission (EHNAC) announced in July the development of an assessment program for Accountable Care Organizations (ACO).

With ACO's increasingly relying on IT solutions for payment and care delivery coordination, the Accountable Care Organization Accreditation Program (ACOAP) will provide a new measure of quality by focusing on performance metrics related to technical performance, business processes and resource management.

Importantly, the ACAOP will allow ACOs and IT service groups to determine their readiness to meet federal compliance mandates set under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), among other government regulations.

EHNAC Executive Director Lee Barrett spoke to the standard of validity the ACOAP will provide the industry, noting, "This

new program strengthens the data exchange platforms that make clinical successes possible by giving a third-party 'stamp of approval' to those ACO stakeholders who have demonstrated the secure management of protected health information and can provide assurances to their overall corporate integrity and trust between entities."

The announcement of the ACOAP follows other industry certification initiatives including EHNAC's partnership with the Workgroup for Electronic Data Interchange, which will allow vendor organizations to have their practice management systems accredited, and the Health Information Management Systems Society's DELTA benchmarking tool for health IT analytics.

CNSI values its numerous certifications, many of which can be found on our website, because they help define our organization as a trusted industry innovator. In addition, we were proud to announce this past May that our Health and Human Services Organization Unit was appraised at CMMI Level 3, which helps drive value for our clients by benchmarking elements of project cost, delivery and quality.

As the health care industry continues to embrace and adopt new technologies, accreditation programs will continue to play an important role by providing objective, external reviews that help ensure that the best-in-class technology is being properly leveraged for government clients and consumers.

What other ways can we endorse the effectiveness of the latest health IT advances? Tweet @CNSICorp to let us know! Follow CNSI on Twitter.