



Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report

April 24, 2008

Leavitt Calls On Successor To Continue Bush Administration's 'Four Cornerstones' Plan

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt on Wednesday urged his successor to continue with the Bush administration's "four cornerstones" initiative that promotes collaborative efforts to improve the national health care system and reduce costs, CQ HealthBeat reports.

Leavitt, speaking at the World Health Care Congress in Washington, D.C., discussed the initiative, which calls for efforts to measure quality of care; better cost data; more use of interoperable electronic medical records; and developing incentives to promote better health care.

Leavitt said, "Better information about quality and cost will not appear all at once, nor will the benefits of its use," adding, "It will happen gradually over the next decade, but we will get benefits at every step in our progress. ... So it is with every social and economic transformation." He added, "My hope is we will see a foundation that others can build on."

According to CQ HealthBeat, Leavitt said that progress has been made in each area of the plan but that he would like to move faster because he has only about nine months remaining in his term. "You can expect our urgency to continue and to see a significant number of administrative changes we intend to make to advance the cause of value-based health care," Leavitt said.

Leavitt said that one of his priorities is requesting that Congress give HHS the authority to require physicians to use electronic prescribing for Medicare. CQ HealthBeat reports that Leavitt would like to see such a provision added to legislation that would halt a scheduled reduction in Medicare physician payment rates.

He warned that increasing health care costs could damage economic progress in the U.S. Leavitt said, "There is no place on the world economic leader board for countries that spend 25% to 30% of their total output on health," adding, "And unless we change, that is where we're headed" (Carey, CQ HealthBeat, 4/23).