# Health Care Executives Call for Interoperable Standards Mandate

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Health care executives at a health technology and innovation forum this week detailed ways to facilitate health IT adoption, *Government Health IT*'s "Notebook" reports.

The World Congress-sponsored forum focused on two ways to overcome the current obstacles:

- An evolutionary approach in which health systems slowly adjust to transformations of the Internet; and
- A more forceful approach with mandates and other efforts to achieve health system interoperability.

An electronic poll of the forum's audience found that 70% agreed that the U.S. government should impose a national mandate for health data interoperability standards to serve as a catalyst for the industry.

Lynn Vogel, CIO of the University of Texas Anderson Cancer Center, said without a mandate, electronic health record vendors have little incentive to interoperate. "If you rely on voluntary adoption, it's going to take a long, long time," Vogel said, adding, "Progress would be made when government applied those standards to their own payer mechanisms."

However, James Hummer, CEO of Whole Health Management, said he doubts that Congress can overcome political pressure from technology companies that might believe a mandate would hurt business.

Executives noted that a mandate would not be a cure-all. For example, cultural attitudes about sharing health information would trump any mandate, especially for young people used to sharing data via open Internet communities such as Facebook, the "Notebook" reports.

In addition, most participating executives agreed that HIPAA rules have been inadequate in addressing changes in attitudes toward openness. John Abele, chair of Boston Scientific, said, "HIPAA set us back a couple of decades in terms of ability to provide better care at lower cost" (McCloskey, *Government Health IT*'s "Notebook," 12/12).