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Acting CMS Administrator Calls Healthcare IT Top Priority at World Healthcare Innovation and Technology Congress

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 -- "Our goal is to provide better quality health care for Medicare beneficiaries at a lower cost and healthcare information technology (IT) systems are going to help us get there; it is one of my top priorities," Leslie V. Norwalk, Acting Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) said today in a keynote speech at the World Healthcare Innovation and Technology Congress (WHITC).

"Interoperable systems support high quality, better care at a lower cost," she said. "We have to be prepared when the baby boomers start signing up for Medicare."

WHITC is a global forum presenting innovative technological advances and thought leadership in the use of technology to transform healthcare practice and enable better access, quality, safety and greater cost effectiveness in the delivery of healthcare

Norwalk also discussed President Bush's plan for more transparency in the health care system that allows consumers to compare quality and pricing options and his commitment to interoperable IT. She said Medicare beneficiaries can now go to a "My Health, My Medicine" web site to evaluate quality and cost options when making healthcare decisions.

"Medicare beneficiaries use the Internet more than I originally anticipated," said Ms. Norwalk, "and they are using our on-line program to keep costs down as they search for a new drug plan."

She said they also were promoting interoperable systems among health care providers, such as hospitals and physicians, as well as an e-prescription program that would help with pharmacy refills and protect against negative drug interaction due to conflicting prescriptions.

In addition to Ms. Norwalk, speakers at the Congress include Peter Robinson, author and former White House speech writer, and Carolyn Clancy, MD, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, HHS.