



Nov. 6, 2006

CMS Might Seek To Promote Health Care IT Through Regulation, Acting Agency Administrator Norwalk Says

Acting CMS Administrator Leslie Norwalk on Wednesday in a keynote speech to the [World Healthcare Innovation and Technology Congress](#) said that without the enactment of legislation to promote health care information technology, CMS "might have to help forward health IT on a regulatory basis," *CQ HealthBeat* reports. CMS has taken regulatory action to exempt hospitals and health plans that donate health care IT hardware and software to physicians from prosecution under anti-kickback laws. In addition, according to Norwalk, CMS might seek to promote health care IT through demonstration projects that test new forms of reimbursement and health care delivery and through Medicare Quality Improvement Organizations. Norwalk said that "since Medicare pays for health care services and IT is simply not among them, we have to use things like demonstration authority or other approaches to help them pick up health IT." Norwalk added, "Basically, the Medicare program is not set up to pay for the adoption of health IT, but what we could be set up to do ultimately is to pay for performance. ... If health IT helps you get to determine what performance is relative to standard measures, then that's something that we'd like to move toward." Norwalk also discussed the need for interoperability standards to promote health care IT. "One of the things that can get in the way, of course, is ... if payers have all sorts of different standards across the board," she said, adding, "If we can help harmonize ... standards, it makes it easier for providers"