May 23, 2014

Last weekend I had the opportunity to attend the closing presentations of the Triangle Startup Weekend: Health DataJam, hosted by HQ Raleigh and Forward Impact. The open-data competition connected health professionals, entrepreneurs, developers, and designers to relevant, clean health data from federal, state, and local sources. Teams used the open-data to develop health innovation applications and solutions to support positive community and economic impact. Ideas ranged from selecting a physician or personal trainer that’s right for you, to reducing waiting room times and preventing hospital readmissions.

Featured Competition
IEI is standing with the United Way of the Greater Triangle’s 100K Kids Hungry No More challenge. Ideas will be accepted through June 12, 2014. Click here to learn more.

Featured Report
Click here to read the SAS Whitepaper, All-Payer Claims Database: A Platform for Transparency and Innovation.

Featured Website
Click here to see examples of how states are using their All-Payer Claims Database.
The winning team addressed food insecurity and earned a spot at this year’s second annual NC DataPalooza.

While many open-data sources were made available to participants, access to health care pricing and quality of services information was not among them. But that may soon change for some North Carolinians.

Efforts to Gather Healthcare Transparency Data

In 2013, the NC General Assembly passed the Health Care Cost Reduction and Transparency Act that required hospitals to provide information about the 100 most frequently reported admissions for inpatients. It also called for a comparison of the 35 most frequently reported charges of hospitals and freestanding ambulatory surgical facilities. While some believe this is a step in the right direction, others feel it lacks the right focus and is limited in scope.

Last week, the Health Care Cost Institute (HCCI) announced that it will work with health payers Aetna, Humana, and UnitedHealthcare to develop and provide consumers with free access to information regarding healthcare cost and quality from aggregate pricing data. Following this announcement, several other major carriers have expressed interest in
Another initiative aiming to provide access to information about health care cost and quality involves establishment of an all-payer claims database (APCD) in North Carolina. An APCD is a large-scale database that includes data from medical claims, pharmacy claims, eligibility and provider files, and dental claims from a state’s public and private payers. The comprehensive, multi-payer data allows states and other stakeholders to better understand the cost, quality, and utilization of healthcare for their residents, moving us closer to better population health. It also has enormous potential for researchers, policy makers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders.

The potential use of an APCD, from the SAS Whitepaper, All-Payer Claims Database: A Platform for Transparency and Innovation.

Fourteen states have existing APCD systems and an additional 26 states are working towards an APCD, but there are hurdles to establishing such a system. It would require generation of sufficient stakeholder support, possible enactment of state legislation, and a commitment of ongoing funding to support and maintain the system. There is a wide range of costs for state-level APCDs depending on data sources, functionality of the system, and where it is hosted. There are also privacy and security issues that would need to be addressed when considering this type of initiative.

Despite these challenges, some public and private stakeholder groups in the state would like to see North Carolina work towards establishing an APCD. Whatever direction we head, moving our state toward achieving the Triple Aim goals of improved health, reduced costs, and better quality will serve to create a
healthier and wealthier North Carolina.

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