“To me, Meaningful Use is the beginning. This is a beginning in how we can use electronic records,” says Dr. Christopher Tashjian of River Falls Medical Clinic.

‘These are really good ideas’

President Obama’s signing of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides $35 billion in Medicare and Medicaid incentives to eligible professionals (MD, DO, DDS, DDM, DPM, OD, DC) who use a qualified electronic health record (EHR) in a meaningful way, which is dictated by standards set forth by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

“I was asked a lot of questions about what is this, what does it mean. I was a little bit skeptical,” Dr. Tashjian says. “But as it came about and the criteria was actually published, the one common thing that came across was these are really good ideas,” Dr. Tashjian says.

Driven by CMS, the goals of using an EHR are:

- Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of care while reducing disparities
- Engage patients and family members in their care
- Promote public and population health
- Improve care coordination
- Promote the privacy and security of electronic health records

“These ideas actually improve patient care, and these are things we should be doing if we’re not. And if we are doing them, they just confirm that we’re on the right track,” Dr. Tashjian shares.

It was important for Dr. Tashjian to attest to Meaningful Use on the very first day the process was available - April 18, 2011.

“We’re fortunate that Cerner was able to keep up with us and get us the information and the data that we needed so that we could attest on day one. That was important to us. But it was important mostly because we wanted to provide the best care,” he recalls.

On April 18, Dr. Tashjian became the 23rd physician in the nation to attest for Meaningful Use.

Key Facts

- First four providers in the nation to receive Meaningful Use incentives use Cerner
- Thousands of physicians using Cerner have successfully attested for Meaningful Use

Meaningful Use helps physicians provide the best care

Christopher Tashjian, MD and Juan Salazar, MD

Meaningful Use Attestation

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Meaningful Use makes cents

Not far behind Dr. Tashjian in the attestation process was McAllen, Texas physician Dr. Juan Salazar. Dr. Salazar successfully attested on April 18 with the assistance of his entire office and the Cerner team.

On May 19, just 30 days after the attestation process opened to physicians, Dr. Salazar became the first physician in the nation to receive a Medicare EHR Meaningful Use automatic bank deposit. “I had been using an EHR for less than two years and I successfully attested and received one of the very first Meaningful Use checks. If I can do it, anyone can,” he says.

As a solo practitioner and practice owner, Dr. Salazar says that small practices should realize how quickly upfront costs for an EHR can be recouped. Dr. Salazar purchased his Cerner Ambulatory EHR in 2009 and received his stimulus check on March 19, 2011. “I got my $18,000. I now have a free system,” he says.

Meaningful Use makes sense

Dr. Salazar also highlights that there are many benefits to attesting, and the incentive check is only one of them. “My EHR has made me and my office staff more efficient. The quality of care we deliver to our patients is greater, and I feel strongly that the Meaningful Use requirements set forth by CMS enhance our use of the electronic records,” he says. “In my opinion, the Meaningful Use requirements are things that all physicians should be doing to enhance the quality of care delivered to their patients.”

In meeting Meaningful Use criteria, Dr. Salazar has increased his documentation, improved his clinical notes and now provides patients with a better summary of their visit when they leave his practice.

“When everything combined, we’re practicing better medicine. That’s why most of us get into medicine as physicians — to practice good medicine,” Dr. Salazar says. “With the assistance of Cerner’s EHR and the Meaningful Use requirements, our patients in McAllen, Texas, are reaping the benefits of enhanced care.”

Additionally, Dr. Salazar says that physicians who are preparing to attest to Meaningful Use should expect improved documentation and the potential for higher code levels. Meaningful Use requirements have enabled him to use more accurate code levels.

“The Meaningful Use requirements are things that all physicians should be doing to enhance the quality of care delivered to their patients.”

- Juan Salazar, MD

“Just the simple act of handwriting, you just could not write everything down. Now I can add more bullets, the notes are more complete, more robust and give more information,” Dr. Salazar explains.

Dr. Tashjian agrees. He adds, “It really helps us with day-to-day care and improves communications.”

Delivering value

Cerner, a global leader in health care, is solving healthcare’s many challenges by connecting the right people with the right information at the right time. Building on 30 years of experience and partnerships at more than 9,000 client sites, we are finding new and innovative ways to deliver value to our clients.

By partnering with Cerner, you’ll gain the experience of our 1,000+ on-staff clinicians, and you’ll enjoy the benefits of more than $2.5 billion in research and development. And with new incentives coming from the economic stimulus package, there’s no better time to choose Cerner.

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