

# Obama's Electronic Medical Records Scam

☒ Here's more evidence that government "cures" are inevitably worse than the "diseases" they seek to wipe out. Buried in the trillion-dollar stimulus law of 2009 was an electronic medical records "incentive" program. Like most of President Obama's health care rules, this top-down electronic record-sharing scheme is a big fat bust.

Oversight is lax. Cronyism is rife. The job-killing and privacy-undermining consequences have only just begun.

The program was originally sold as a cost-saving measure. In theory, modernizing record-collection is a good idea, and many private health care providers have already made the change. But as with many government "incentive" programs, the EMR bribe is a tax-subsidized, one-size-fits-all mandate. This one pressures health care professionals and hospitals across the country into radically federalizing their patient data and opening up medical information to untold abuse. Penalties kick in for any provider that hasn't switched over by 2014.

So, what's it to you? Well, \$4 billion has already gone out to 82,535 professionals and 1,474 hospitals, and a total of \$6 billion will be doled out by 2016. But the feds' reckless profligacy, neglect and favoritism have done more harm than good.

Don't take my word for it. A recent report released by the Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General acknowledged that the incentive system is "vulnerable to paying incentives to professionals and hospitals that do not fully meet" the program's quality assurance requirements. The federal health bureaucracy "has not implemented strong prepayment safeguards, and its ability to safeguard incentive

payments postpayment is also limited," the IG concluded.

Translation: No one is actually verifying whether the transition from paper to electronic is improving patient outcomes and health services. No one is actually guarding against GIGO (garbage in, garbage out). No one is checking whether recipients of the EMR incentives are receiving money redundantly (e.g., raking in payments when they've already converted to electronic records). No one is actually protecting private data from fraud, abuse or exploitation.

Little is being done to recoup ill-gotten payments. In any case, such "pay and chase" policing after the fact is a crummy way to run government in lean times – or in fat times, for that matter.

As for the claim that the EMR conversion will reduce paperwork, many doctors say the reality is just the opposite. In Greensboro, N.C., Dr. Richard Aronson told local TV station FOX 8 that the mandate doubled the amount of paperwork in his private practice. Everyone from optometrists to general practitioners to chiropractors to podiatrists must divert precious time and resources to conforming with Washington health bureaucrats' imposed vision. Some medical professionals are now warning that the dangerous phenomenon of "distracted doctoring" is on the rise as a result of data-driven imperatives that direct health care providers' attention away from their patients and onto their screens and hand-held devices.

You know who is benefiting from the initiative? Put on your shocked faces: Obama donors and cronies.

Billionaire Judith Faulkner, Obama's medical information czar and a major Democratic contributor, just happens to be the founder and CEO of Epic Systems – a medical software company that stores nearly 40 percent of the U.S. population's health data. Another billion-dollar patient-record database grant

program has doled out money to the University of Chicago Medical Center (where first lady Michelle Obama and senior adviser Valerie Jarrett both served in high-paid positions). As I've previously reported, these administration grants circumvent any and all congressional deliberation as part of Team Obama's election-year "We Can't Wait" initiatives.

Even as the White House touted the move toward gee-whiz 21st-century electronic databases, health care professionals in the know have debunked that claim, too. Companies like Faulkner's, which lobbied loudest for the mandates and "incentives," represent traditional hard drive-dependent software firms that are already dated. As Athenahealth Chairman and CEO Jonathan Bush, who advocates cloud-computing alternatives, put it: The Obama electronic records mandate is "healthcare information technology's version of cash-for-clunkers."

Then there's the still-growing and untold number of doctors nationwide who are closing up shop or limiting their practices and converting to "concierge care" to escape this and myriad other Obamacare intrusions. My own primary care physician in Colorado Springs quit her regular practice and converted to "concierge care" because of the EMR imposition. Creve Coeur, Mo., doctor Shari Cohen made the same move.

"The demands of caring for my patients while navigating through the current health care delivery systems dictated that I take more and more time away from patient care and spend an increasing part of my day on the system itself," she told the Creve Coeur Patch. "Electronic Medical Records was the final shove for me. It added another whole layer in interference in the doctor-patient relationship and one I was not sure I wanted to take on."

More paperwork. More waste. Less accountability. Less care. Government malpractice at work.