

Survey: HIEs/RHIOs Reducing Costs

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Sixty-nine percent of health information exchanges and regional health information organizations that consider themselves fully operational report reductions in health care costs among participants, according to results of an annual survey from eHealth Initiative, an advocacy group.

Cost reductions result from fewer redundant tests, reduced hospital admissions because of medication errors, decreased cost of care for chronically ill patients, and less staff time spent on administrative functions, according to survey respondents.

Washington-based eHealth Initiative surveyed 130 data exchange initiatives in 48 states for its 2008 Fifth Annual Survey of Health Information Exchange at the State and Local Levels. Forty-two of the initiatives reported they were fully operational, compared with 32 in the 2007 survey. Other findings from fully operational initiatives include:



* Fifty-two percent report positive impacts on health care delivery. These include decreased prescribing errors, improved access to test results, improve compliance with chronic care and prevention guidelines, better patient outcomes, increased recognition of disease outbreaks, improved quality of practice life, and reductions in malpractice insurance costs.

* Sixty-nine percent report a return on investment for their participants, compared with 31% in last year's survey.

Achieving a sustainable business model continues to be problematic for many of the 130 surveyed HIEs and RHIOs. Half of all respondents report development of the model is a very difficult challenge; 47% say securing upfront funding also is very difficult.

Full survey results are available at ehealthinitiative.org.

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