

In Brief: Verizon head pushes for healthcare IT

April 18 2006

The head of Verizon urged Congress to create an electronic data system to reduce healthcare costs and improve patient care.

"Of the almost \$2 trillion spent on healthcare in this country, less than 5 percent is spent on information technology. ... Fewer than 10 percent of hospitals have electronic records. In fact, 90 percent of healthcare transactions are conducted by paper, fax and phone calls -- putting the medical system radically out of synch with the way business is conducted in every other sector of the economy," Verizon Chief Executive Ivan Seidenberg said at the annual world healthcare conference.

He said Congress should act on legislation that would create "a 21st century healthcare system" by setting standards for electronic systems to transmit patient information and other data and, ultimately, require healthcare providers to use these systems. The Senate, with "widespread, bipartisan support," has passed one bill, he said, and "now the House of Representatives needs to do the same."

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Citation: In Brief: Verizon head pushes for healthcare IT (2006, April 18) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-04-verizon-healthcare.html>

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