



Obama Administration Appoints New York Physician to Represent the Underserved on National Health Information Technology Panel

April 7, 2009. Neil Calman MD, president and CEO of New York's Institute for Family Health, will represent the interests of vulnerable populations on the new Health Information Technology Policy Panel, the U.S. Government Accountability Office announced Friday. Dr. Calman is one of 13 members appointed by the Obama Administration to make policy recommendations on the development of a nationwide health information technology infrastructure, a critical component of the administration's overall health reform plan. Dr. Calman will serve a two-year term on the new Committee, which was established by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

"I am honored to have been appointed to this group of incredibly knowledgeable and creative leaders," Dr. Calman said. "As the administration works to make high-quality, affordable health care available to all Americans, we will be working to create a significant part of the technology framework in support of that effort. The challenges ahead are substantial but the opportunities are even greater."

Dr. Calman is a board-certified family physician who has served low-income residents of New York City's ethnically diverse neighborhoods for more than 30 years. Throughout his career Dr. Calman has fought to bring quality health care to all New Yorkers irrespective of their insurance coverage or ability to pay. The Institute for Family Health, which he founded in 1984 as its first physician, has grown into a network of 16 community health centers, 9 homeless health care sites and over 40 grant-funded programs in Manhattan, the Bronx and the Mid-Hudson Valley and employs more than 600 people. Under Dr. Calman's leadership, in 2002 the Institute for Family Health became one of the first community health center networks in the country to implement a fully-integrated electronic health record system and practice management system. In affiliation with Beth Israel Medical Center and Kingston Hospital, the Institute trains family medicine residents in its fully electronic practice environment, ensuring that the workforce of the future will be able to make full use of these new technologies.

Congressional representatives from districts with Institute health centers wrote letters supporting Dr. Calman's appointment: "I have known of Dr. Calman's work for a long time and applaud the leadership he has shown in the community health center movement and in health care for underserved communities," said Congressman José E. Serrano, NY-16.

Representative Carolyn Maloney, NY-14, wrote, “For over a decade, Dr. Calman has led the adoption of electronic medical records and their use in tracking and remediating health care for underserved communities.” Congressman Joseph Crowley, NY-7, said, “The electronic management system Dr. Calman spearheaded at the Institute for Family Health has had far-reaching benefits in improving patient care and outcomes.”

Leaders from the health care community agree: “Not only has Dr. Calman harnessed information technology as a structure for excellence in health care at the Institute, but, as our partner in the NYC Center of Excellence, has contributed significantly to public health informatics priorities,” said Dr. Farzad Mostashari, Assistant Commissioner, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. “Dr. Calman is truly himself a model family physician and he has built the Institute for Family Health around his views that underserved populations deserve quality medical care.”

Additional letters of support for Dr. Calman’s appointment were provided by the National Association of Community Health Centers, the New York State Department of Health, the Health Information Management Systems Society, the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved, the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute, the eHealth Initiative, and others.

Dr. Neil Calman has received numerous distinctions for his work in health informatics and the reduction of health disparities, including the 2005 Physician IT Leadership Award from HIMSS, the Health Information Management Systems Society. In addition, the Institute for Family Health has received the New York Times Company’s Nonprofit Excellence Award for Use of Technology and Focus on Mission and the prestigious Davies Award in Public Health from HIMSS. The Institute is a Centers for Disease Control-designated “Center of Excellence in the Elimination of Disparities.”

Dr. Calman is a founding member of the National Collaborative for Health IT and Underserved Populations, a consortium funded by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health and supported by HIMSS and others. He has published numerous articles, including “Using Health Information Technology to Improve Health Quality and Safety in Community Health Centers,” in the *Journal of Progress in Community Health Partnerships*, 2007; and “Electronic Health Records: The Use of Technology to Eliminate Racial Disparities in Health Outcomes” in *Medical Informatics: An Executive Primer*, 2007.

The Health Information Technology Policy Panel, established in 2009 by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, includes leadership from the patient advocacy, health provider, health workforce, information technology, and research communities. Additional members will be appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Majority and Minority leaders of the Senate, and the Speaker and Minority leader of the House of Representatives. The Committee is expected to play a key role in developing policies that promote President Obama’s call for nationwide adoption of health information technology to improve care and reduce health system costs.

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