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**Sent:** Tuesday, August 06, 2013 10:23 AM  
**To:** OS - ONC Feds  
**Subject:** Announcement

My Dear ONC'ers,

On a pre-dawn morning in June 2009, I paced helplessly outside my Mom's hospital room as alarms beeped and the monitor showed the most recent run of life-threatening heart arrhythmia. I had screwed up my courage to ask to see the paper chart, but I couldn't even read the cardiology consult's name. After her discharge it was also very difficult to get her records; she didn't get needed follow-up and required emergency surgery. The complications, which weren't supposed to happen, indecently increased the hospital's revenue.

I joined ONC a week later. This office had a daunting task ahead of it. Working backwards from the outcomes we hoped to enable, we had to define "Meaningful Use" of electronic health records, establish a new certification program, endorse national standards, design and set up a slew of new grant programs to assist in health IT adoption, exchange, workforce, research, and privacy. There were 32 staff members.

You will remember the successive sprints – to recruit and establish the Regional Extension Centers and collaborate with newly appointed Health IT coordinators in every state. The "Office of No Christmas" moniker that we earned for yuletide rulemaking. Trudging 4 miles through the blizzard--to a hotel that still had power-- for Beacon application reviews.

And then came an intense focus on implementation and integrity of our grant programs. Accelerating consensus around healthcare standards through an innovative new open source community paradigm in the Direct Project and its successor Standards and Interoperability Framework. Coordinating policy with our federal partners. Adding a new focus on consumer eHealth, and giving consumers access to their own data through the Blue Button. Creating a Health IT safety program.

We gradually assembled within ONC a microcosm of the diverse and passionate Health IT community itself. Implementers, doctors and nurses, software developers and project managers, privacy experts, proud standards geeks, patient advocates, public health workers, researchers

and data analysts. And we added strength, integrity and resilience by recruiting a core of civil servants who are dedicated to lifelong public service.

You each brought to ONC your own personal commitments and your community's perspectives, and we unified those divisions through our shared goals: A better health system-- that truly knows and cares for all of its patients- through application of information and learning. You nurtured a culture of commitment to American innovation, and an essential optimism that healthcare's best days are ahead of us.

Regional extension centers have assisted 140,000 providers- over 40% of all primary care providers in the country and over 80% of critical access hospitals- the largest medical technical assistance project in history.

Nationwide, adoption of health records has tripled in doctor's offices and increased five-fold or more in hospitals. Over half of prescriptions are now electronic. New functionalities essential for population health management are increasingly available and used. National standards and protocols for information exchange and interoperability are being implemented throughout the industry. Over the next 12 months we will see a great democratization of health information as individuals become empowered to download their own health information, and venture capital investment in new tools to help us manage our own health and healthcare are skyrocketing. Meanwhile, hospital readmissions are dropping, healthcare cost inflation is at historic lows, and the movement towards payment that rewards quality and value is gaining speed.

My mom has recovered now. Her hospital is working to implement new systems to provide accountable care. Her prescriptions and health records are electronic and can be shared across the state. Like 37 million other elderly Americans, we can access her medical history with her Medicare Blue Button records on her mobile phone.

here are formidable challenges still ahead for our community, and for ONC. But none more difficult than what we have already accomplished. In these difficult and challenging times, your work gives us hope that we can still do big things as a country. That government and the private sector working together can do what neither can do alone. We have been pioneers in a new landscape, but that landscape is one changed for ever, and for better.

It is difficult for me to announce that I am leaving. I don't know what I will be doing after I leave public service, but be assured that I will be by your side as we continue to battle for healthcare transformation, cheering you on.

Best wishes to you all,

Farzad