



TOWER  
Patient Experience Consulting Group

**News Release**  
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**Meaningful Use: *Transforming Patient Engagement***

**Los Angeles, CA – [PressReleasePoint](#)** – The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) and The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has released the long awaited final requirements for State 2 Electronic Health Records Incentive programs. Included in the rules is an emphasis on patient engagement.

New rules specific to patient engagement include:

- The “provide patients with an electronic copy of their health information” objective is being replaced with an “electronic/online access” core objective.
- A new core objective for eligible providers is “use secure electronic messaging to communicate with patients on relevant health information“
- CMS proposed two new core objectives related to patient engagement with measures that require patients to take specific actions in order for a provider to achieve meaningful use and receive an EHR incentive payment. For both, the threshold was lowered from the proposed 10% of patients to 5% in the final rule. CMS also recognizes broadband availability limitations in some provider practice areas and introduced an exclusion.
- Patient and Family Engagement is one of the six key health care policy domains of which all providers must selection at least three for clinical quality measures (CQM) and reporting. These are the CQMs that reflect the potential to improve patient-centered care and the quality of care delivered to patients. They emphasize the importance of collecting patient-reported data and the ability to impact care at the individual patient level as well as the population level through greater involvement of patients and families in decision making, self care, activation, and understanding of their health condition and its effective management.
- More than 50% of all unique patients seen by the eligible provider are provided timely (within 4 business days) online access to their health information. More than 50% of all patients who are discharged from the inpatient or emergency department of an eligible hospital or Critical Access Hospital have their information available online within 36 hours of discharge.

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The ONC final rule complements the newly released CMS final rule and reflects their commitment to promote patient engagement and safety.

As hospitals and other providers prepare to comply, they must first acknowledge that this isn't just an issue for their IT departments to address. Instead, attaining meaningful use of one's electronic health records/systems for patient engagement will require the collective involvement and collaboration of disciplines from across the organization... clinical, operations, information services and communications/marketing.

"Healthcare leaders will need to be strategic and put every decision in the context of the patient experience. Having an effective patient strategy will lead to happy customers, staff and a healthcare organization exceeding their business objectives" said Dr. Sue Sutton, CEO at [Tower](#), a patient experience consulting group based in Los Angeles, California.

The approach required is one of re-defining patient engagement across all touchpoints, both physical and virtual, to positively transform the patient's experience – as perceived by the patient. "The research tells us where the patients are going, but institutions aren't paying attention. If the approach taken doesn't actually engage patients, the organization won't meet the meaningful use criteria and they may actually lose some patients to healthcare providers who have implemented more patient-centered engagement strategies", added Dr. Sutton.

Enterprise portals can facilitate electronic access by making information within existing systems available in a more patient-friendly manner. The portal helps accomplish the goal of compliance with the MU criteria, but it does so at the same time it can accommodate additional features and personalization for enhanced engagement and a better patient experience. Ultimately, this is what will lead to improved outcomes – the ultimate goal of meaningful use.

CMS will audit healthcare providers who are participating in the meaningful use program and will focus in on those who show substantial noncompliance. For detailed information, see

[CMS Final Rule Regulations](#)  
[CMS Final Rule Fact Sheet](#)

[ONC Final Rule Regulations](#)  
[ONC Standards and Certification Final Rule Fact Sheet](#)

##End##

**About [TOWER](#):** Tower is a highly-experienced consulting group exclusively dedicated to positively transforming patient experiences within leading complex medical institutions on a consistent basis across the entire range of patient touch points. We engage top-level executives responsible for the operations of the enterprise as well as 'patient-facing' staff and care providers and other enterprise participants – to significantly enhance operational processes and change the organizational culture - in order to achieve long-term transformation of patient experiences. We do this without an agenda in terms of technology or vendors. Unlike many other consultants, we connect strategy from the top down with hands-on implementation from the bottom-up to achieve the institutions' objectives.