

The American Health Information Community (AHIC) is recommending that the federal government start preparing for the capability to electronically store a patient's genetic makeup so that doctors can match medical treatments to their genes.

According to *Government Health IT*, the connections between patients' genetic characteristics and responses to particular medications are beginning to be understood by scientists. For example, certain breast cancers are linked to the patient's genes, and those cancers can be treated more effectively now that the connection is understood.

If Health and Human Services Department (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt accepts AHIC's recommendations, genetic information will be included in EHRs and research databases.

One of the recommendations calls for HHS agencies and the National Institute of Standards and Technology to clarify and determine the role that each would play in standardizing pharmacogenetic data. AHIC also recommends that HHS agencies identify the genetic data that EHRs should contain.

AHIC has recommended that The National Library of Medicine, which already has taken a lead role in some HHS work on genetic information, head the effort to integrate genetic information into EHRs or personal health records, reported *Government Health IT*.

Another recommendation calls for the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies involved in research to develop best practices for patients to consent to uses of their genetic data.

"HHS should work with stakeholders, including professional associations representing clinicians, clinical laboratories, pharmacists and others, to develop a white paper on the opportunities and challenges associated with dispensing pharmaceutical drugs based on pharmacogenomic test-derived interpretations in inpatient, ambulatory and mail-order services," according to a letter from AHIC to Leavitt.

AHIC's Personalized Health Care Workgroup, an HHS advisory committee, developed the recommendations.