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### 2006 Health IT Driving Forces

Several factors together will shape the health IT market in 2006, but some will pan out to be more important than others. The key driving forces shaping health IT in 2006 will be:

1. Consumers' costs and demand for IT
2. Consumers' demand for more health care information and price transparency
3. Medicare prescription drug benefit implementation
4. Disaster preparedness
5. Health care budgeting on federal and state levels; and
6. 2006 congressional mid-term elections

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### Ten Tips for Evaluating EBM Tools

Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) tools can include order sets, discharge notes and safety checklists as well as patient education, risk management resources and other literature and journals. The following tips for evaluating EBM tools will help facilitate an informed decision-making process when reviewing potential EBM tool providers.

1. Understand the process.
2. Know the source:
3. Check the update policy
4. Identify customization options
5. Confirm cost/benefit of the tools
6. Verify implementation components
7. Involve your stakeholders
8. Include other goals as part of strategy
9. Look for growth potential
10. Ensure compatibility and interoperability

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### Consumers Anxious about Privacy

The 2005 National Consumer Health Privacy survey conducted by the California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF) has found that, despite new federal protections, consumers are still anxious about the privacy of their personal health information and misinformed about their rights under HIPAA. The persistence of consumer concerns put the health IT agenda at risk, the CHCF warned. Specific findings include:

- Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents are “some-what” or “very” concerned about the privacy of their

personal medical records.

- Almost a quarter (24%) are aware of specific incidents in which personal information was compromised.
- Fifty-two percent of respondents said they were “some-what” or “very” concerned that insurance claims information might be used by an employer to limit their job opportunities. (Six years ago, in the 1999 study, just 36% of respondents expressed this same concern.)
- Thirteen percent admitted to having put their health at risk by engaging in privacy-protective behaviours, such as: avoiding their regular doctor, asking their doctor to fudge a diagnosis, paying for a test because they did not want to submit a claim, or avoiding a test altogether.

Consumers appear to be willing to share personal health information if they receive some personal benefit in return. Nearly all respondents were willing to share their information with physicians involved in their care, though only 30% of respondents were willing to share their information with health professionals not directly involved in their care. Only 20% of respondents are willing to share personal health information with government agencies.

► [www.chcf.org](http://www.chcf.org)

### UK's Health IT Project – Status Report

In the UK, one of the world's largest IT outsourcing contracts is underway as England's National Health Service has committed to spend more than US\$10 billion over the next ten years on a nationwide healthcare IT modernization program. The project aims to digitize medical histories, diagnostic tests, prescriptions, and appointments for more than 50 million citizens. According to observers, however, the project is “limping along.” The government earmarked less than US\$200 million for pilot projects, which has resulted in implementation difficulties and delays. Cross-platform compatibility and integration are two ever-present challenges. The pure complexity of the project has led to delays and financial setbacks, according to participants Accenture and Tata Consulting Services. The latest quarterly filing from Accenture shows aggregate losses on the NHS contracts for this year to be as much as US\$150 million. ► [www.informationweek.com](http://www.informationweek.com)

### HL7 Introduces New Suite of Standards

Health Level Seven announced that it is releasing to its 2,000-plus members a suite of standards that will be the organization's most definitive specifications to date. In creating the new standards – collectively called Version 3 Normative Edition 2005, or V3 – HL7, researchers focused on semantic interoperability and universal application to ensure that the standards have wide impact but also can be tailored to accommodate regional variations.

► [www.hl7.com](http://www.hl7.com)