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# Health Care Providers Poised for Greater Health IT Use, Expert Says

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While security and privacy concerns have historically stymied adoption of information technology (IT) in the health care industry, use is likely to accelerate as hospitals and other providers seek to improve care delivery, patient safety and productivity, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. Writing in the *Journal*, University of Arizona professor Amar Gupta, M.D., highlights several key applications of health IT, including the use of electronic medical records across globally integrated health information systems. The development of such standardized electronic medical records, Gupta notes, will enable a range of providers to access and interpret patients' medical histories, regardless of location, language or software type. Examining health IT's use in improving drug safety, Gupta notes that the uptick in world travel and patients' increased access to foreign prescription drugs has fueled the need for a global drug surveillance system. One such program, currently under development by researchers at the University of Arizona for the Food and Drug Administration's Critical Path Institute, seeks to build a network that would pull and share data from pharmacies, insurers, drug oversight agencies, providers and others to monitor adverse drug reactions and safety issues. Experts hope the prototype will one day replace the disparate reporting methods currently used by foreign and domestic pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Gupta also underscores the need to enhance sharing of medical knowledge, noting that, while volumes of medical data are available online, the reliability of that information is not always clear. He reports that developers are currently working to create tools that would analyze a range of information, including data from textbooks, medical journals and other sources, to deliver timely, trustworthy and pertinent medical information to consumers and providers. Such an initiative, however, likely would require input from medical, research and IT professionals across the world to review and manage the volume of available materials (Gupta, *Wall Street Journal*, 10/20/08 [subscription required]).

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