

# McKnight's

## LONG-TERM CARE NEWS



**Whiz kid**

Mark McClellan heads a new long-term care effort

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Publication of the Year

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### IT Update

» **Peter Kress** will be the featured speaker during a free webcast on harnessing information technology. The event will be held March 25 as part of the *McKnight's Online Expo*. Participants will gain a better understanding of why new devices, social networking and other options are changing the role of technology in this sector. Kress is vice president and CIO for ACTS Retirement-Life Communities. To register, visit [www.mcknights.com/expo](http://www.mcknights.com/expo).

» **The Veterans Affairs** Department has begun a competition among its employees to see who can develop the best ideas for integrating health IT to improve the agency's healthcare practices and treatments. After selecting 100 winners, the department will ask authors to submit full proposals.

» **Health and Human Services** Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently unveiled The National Health Security Strategy. The project's goal is to protect people's health when a major emergency occurs. The plan lays out priorities for the government and providers for the next four years, she said.

» **Electronic health records** will be widely used in the next decade, according to David Blumenthal, M.D., the national coordinator for health IT. He made the prediction at a HIPAA meeting in Washington. "Using EHRs will become a core competency for physicians. And once we've established that, it will be considered an absolute requisite," he said.

» **The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society** and the American Society for Quality jointly launched a new site that offers more than a dozen case studies documenting the effective use of health IT tools. The studies will be especially useful to providers planning to become "meaningful users," said Joseph Fortuna, M.D., chair-elect of the Healthcare Division of ASQ. Information is available for providers at no charge. For more information, visit [www.bimss.org](http://www.bimss.org).

» **The Federal Communications Commission** wants to encourage the use of wireless devices and applications in healthcare as part of a national broadband plan to be released in March.

## Tech spending is prominent in Obama's budget proposal

By John O'Connor

President Obama's \$3.8 trillion budget proposal sets aside relatively generous funding for IT-related matters. The White House seems to be implying that investing in health IT now will reap savings and better healthcare quality later.

The plan includes \$3.6 billion to strengthen the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Of that amount, \$110 million is earmarked for a new, comprehensive Health Care Data Improvement Initiative. This new program will layer additional data analysis and information sharing to claims processing.

"We'll make many of the necessary investments our country has been putting off for years, including investments in fighting healthcare fraud," said Department of Health and Human Services



HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said that fighting healthcare fraud is a priority.

Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

In fact, the spending plan sets aside \$561 million in discretionary resources to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid program integrity activities, including more Medicaid audits.

Additionally, the plan calls for the following:

- \$78 million for the Office of the National Coordinator to accelerate health IT adoption and electronic health records utilization.

- \$261 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to support new research projects in patient-centered health research.

- \$1 million for HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation to evaluate electronic health record adoption and the economic factors affecting health IT.

But getting these funding increases will be much more difficult for Democrats, who recently lost a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. In January, Republican Scott Brown scored a major upset by capturing the Senate seat left vacant by Edward Kennedy's death. The shift effectively puts the filibuster—or at least the threat of one—back in play.

Obama invited Republicans to a bipartisan health summit on Feb. 25. ■



Tracy Swen  
Golden West Senior Residence

### "I couldn't live without ..."

When Golden West Senior Residence in Boulder, CO, opened its new building in 2008, Associate Director of Finance and Operations Tracy Swen went looking for a new way to monitor the facility's restaurant-

style dining program. That's when she discovered FullCount, a comprehensive point-of-sale program designed specifically for retirement communities.

"The residents pay a monthly balance," Swen explains. "They can eat whenever they want and charge whatever they want. If it goes over a certain amount it turns into a charge account."

Besides allowing her staff to save time by automating reports, Swen says the FullCount system helps with wellness checks.

"We pull the report to see who has eaten that day, and if someone did not eat and they did not check out with the front desk, we go and check on that resident in their apartment," she says.



### A meal monitor

FullCount allows residents the flexibility to choose where and when they eat. It also reduces administrative costs through efficient reporting and streamlining of dining services. For more info: [www.fullcount.net](http://www.fullcount.net) (888) 387-5670

Is there something you couldn't live without? Tell Editor James M. Berklan at [jim.berklan@mcknights.com](mailto:jim.berklan@mcknights.com).