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CONTACT: Richard Coorsh

(202) 215-1486 (mobile)

email: rcoorsh@fah.org

BLUMENTHAL UNDERSCORES IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

WASHINGTON, DC – Information is “the lifeblood of medicine” and health information technology is destined to be “the circulatory system for that information,” remarked David Blumenthal, M.D, the federal government’s National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

As part of this process, the government has developed a framework for spurring the adoption and dissemination of electronic health records (EHRs). This framework includes a proposed rule, released in late December, which outlines proposed provisions governing the EHR incentive programs established under the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” (ARRA) – including the definition of “meaningful use” of health information technology.

Under the ARRA, beginning in 2011, CMS will provide incentive payments to hospitals and physicians who are “meaningful users” of electronic health records.

Another part of this framework is an interim final regulation from Dr. Blumenthal’s office that sets initial standards, implementation specifications, and certification criteria for EHR technology. Furthermore, his office soon will issue a notice of proposed rulemaking laying out the certification process for meaningful use necessary to become eligible for ARRA incentive payments, he noted.

During his presentation, Dr. Blumenthal complimented the FAH for its health IT expertise and thanked three FAH member company executives for participating in the Health IT federal advisory committees: Jonathan Perlin, M.D., Ph.D., (HCA), Chair of the Health IT Standards Committee; Elizabeth Johnson (Tenet Healthcare Corporation), a member of the Health IT Standards Committee; and Richard Chapman (Kindred Healthcare, Inc.), a member of the Health IT Policy Committee.

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