

March 16, 2009



Office of the National Coordinator
Attention: Judith Sparrow, Room 729D
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Ms. Sparrow:

As President of the American Clinical Laboratory Association (ACLA), I am writing to urge that you appoint a representative of the laboratory industry as a Member to the Health Information Technology (HIT) Standards Committee. ACLA – which represents the leading national, regional, and local independent laboratories – recommends that Ken McCaslin, Senior HealthCare Standards Architect, Quest Diagnostics Incorporated be appointed a member to the HIT Standards Committee.

Laboratory testing results influence an estimated 60-70% of all medical decisions, and, are an absolutely key part of the medical record. Laboratory data represent 60% of the electronic medical record. Laboratory data is also complex, voluminous, and laboratories, particularly independent laboratories, have invested extensive resources toward establishing electronic ordering and results reporting systems with physician offices. Laboratories also have extensive expertise and experience with the intricacies of establishing electronic links with thousands of physician offices. For these reasons, laboratories should be represented on the HIT Standards Committee.

ACLA and its member companies are fully engaged and taking a leadership role in establishing nationally uniform standards for the exchange of health care information, and laboratory information in particular. ACLA served on the Steering Committee of the EHR-Lab Interoperability and Connectivity Standards (ELINCS) project – an effort initiated at the behest of former Health and Human Services National Health Information Technology Coordinator, Dr. David Brailer.

Ken McCaslin is well qualified to serve on the HIT Standards Committee. Mr. McCaslin has over 25 years experience in healthcare, specifically in the laboratory industry. He started with International Clinical Laboratory (ICL) Incorporated in 1982 installing laboratory systems in acquired companies. He eventually moved over to Hospital Laboratory Information Systems responsible for laboratory installations within partner hospitals. In 1988 ICL was purchased by SmithKline Beecham Clinical Laboratory (SBCL) and Ken became responsible for the Interface Implementation and Development Team including when Quest Diagnostics purchased SBCL in 1998.

In 2003, Ken was named to his current role as Senior HealthCare Standards Architect. In this position he is the key person responsible for relationships to standards organizations

and government initiatives like HITSP and many others. He has been a member of HL-7 since 1990 and continues to hold key leadership roles. He has actively participated in the development of the ELINCS and HITSP specifications. He also chairs ACLA's own HIT data standards committee.

The issue of health information technology is an important one to ACLA and its membership as we believe the health care system will benefit immensely from the propagation of robust health IT. Implemented properly, IT will provide ready access to timely, relevant, reliable and secure information through an interconnected infrastructure affording better health through better health care.

Once again, thank you for your attention to this issue. If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact Alan Mertz at (202) 637-9466, or you may contact me at 201-791-3600.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Alan Mertz
President, ACLA