

March 6, 2009

Gene L. Dodaro  
Acting Comptroller General of the United States  
General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

As Chairman of the Board 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) Policy Committee. The ACLA Board of Directors – representing the leading national, regional, and local independent laboratories – recommends that Alan Mertz, President of the ACLA – be appointed a Member to the HIT Policy 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 Policy 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.

ACLA President Alan Mertz is well qualified to serve on the HIT Policy Committee. As ACLA's chief executive, he has led our industry's efforts on health care IT. Mr. Mertz has an extensive background in HIPAA and health care information. On February 24, 2009, he delivered ACLA's testimony before the National Committee on Vital & Health Statistics Standards Subcommittee on enhancing standards adoption. He also led our industry's efforts in assuring a smooth transition in implementing the HIPAA Transaction Standards.

From 1998-2003, while Executive Vice President of the Healthcare Leadership Council, Mr. Mertz chaired the "Confidentiality Coalition" which represented virtually the entire health care community (130 organizations). Mr. Mertz was one of the leading experts on HIPAA privacy and he led the successful drive to substantially modify and make

workable the HIPAA privacy regulations. In 1996, while a senior House staff member, he served on the Speaker's health care task force that drafted and passed HIPAA.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Grodman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Marc Grodman  
Chairman and CEO, Bio-Reference Laboratories  
Chairman of the Board, ACLA