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ACLA APPLAUDS NEW LABORATORY “SAFE HARBOR” FOR HEALTH IT

Washington – The American Clinical Laboratory Association (ACLA) applauds a final rule published today by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and HHS’ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that will include laboratories among the entities permitted to donate electronic equipment and training to facilitate electronic health records.

“By permitting laboratories the ability to donate this technology, client hospitals and physicians will be able to access critical prescription and imaging data, in addition to laboratory data, from an existing business partner,” said Alan Mertz, president of ACLA.

“We congratulate the Department of Health and Human Services for recognizing the inherent value laboratory data conveys to physicians, hospitals, and ultimately, patients,” Mertz said. “If we are to realize the dream of a truly electronic health record for all Americans, it is critically important that laboratories be included as laboratory data are the heart of the electronic medical record.”

The final CMS/OIG rule includes clinical laboratories among those permitted to donate electronic health records software or information technology and training services necessary and used predominantly to create, maintain, transmit, or receive electronic health records.

For over a decade, laboratories have had a limited safe harbor that allows laboratories to donate technology to facilitate laboratory orders and results reporting. The new CMS/OIG rule allows a broad class of entities, including laboratories, to donate technology to facilitate the entire electronic health record – including electronic prescribing and imaging.

“The new CMS/OIG rule includes numerous conditions on donors that ACLA is carefully reviewing,” Mertz said. “We look forward to working with the Department to understand and clarify these conditions.”

ACLA issued comments to CMS/OIG strongly supporting laboratories being included among the list of permissible donors in CMS’ and OIG’s Final Rules. Joining ACLA in their written comments supporting the addition of clinical laboratories were the American Medical Association (AMA), the American College of Physicians (ACP), the eHealth Initiative, and the National Alliance for Health Information Technology (NAHIT).

ACLA represents local, regional and national clinical laboratories throughout the United States.