

## **EHRs are essential to fiscal responsibility**

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As the founder of the Texas e-Health Alliance and a former healthcare advisor to a Republican governor, I was disappointed to read Cato Institute scholar Dr. Jeffrey Singer's op-ed decrying electronic health records. Does Dr. Singer not realize that EHR mandates have their roots in conservative thinking and principles?

President George W. Bush created the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and firmly established a long-term vision for our country that included an understanding of the benefits of EHRs. If Republicans care about fiscal responsibility, reducing the cost of healthcare and obviating massive waste and dislocation, then EHRs are an essential part of the solution.

I sympathize with Dr. Singer's frustrations. For one of our most humane professions, there isn't much humanity left in practicing medicine in America. And I acknowledge that part of that frustration lies in the fact that this is still an evolving market with many, many product offerings that range in complexity, price and usability. Even though the government is involved in EHR certification, the array of choices should make any free-market advocate proud.

A return to the dark ages of paper records may stymie short-term frustrations, but it won't put patients first. Patients demand digital connection in all aspects of their lives, and healthcare is no exception. The age of the Internet has arrived, and healthcare cannot afford to lag behind as costs continue to grow. To reduce cost and waste, information needs to flow freely, be easily accessible to the patient and their caregivers, and follow patients wherever they go. The road we're on is not an easy one, but it is one that will ultimately leverage the power of the digital age to improve patients' lives, and that makes it a road worth staying on.