

## 26 of the Smartest People in Health IT

Written by Helen Gregg ([Twitter](#) | [Google+](#)) | May 29, 2014

Technology is becoming a major force in the healthcare industry as providers scramble to not only meet government regulations but to provide the best care for their patients in the most efficient way possible.

Here are 26 of the health IT industry's brightest leaders. *Disclaimer:* List selections were made through an editorial review process, and people could not pay to be included. The list is in alphabetical order.

**Peter Basch, MD.** Dr. Basch is the director for ambulatory electronic health records and health IT policy at MedStar in Columbia, M.D., as well as a senior fellow for health IT policy with the Center for American Progress and a visiting scholar with the Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform of the Brookings Institution. He represents the American College of Physicians at the Physicians' EHR Coalition, co-founded by Dr. Basch in 2004.

Dr. Basch has also advised President Obama on health IT policy, and was the chair of the Maryland EHR Taskforce. He is currently a member of the Health IT Policy Committee's quality measures workgroup.

**David Blumenthal, MD.** Dr. Blumenthal is best known for serving as the National Coordinator for Health IT from 2009 to 2011. During his tenure, he oversaw the implementation of the meaningful use program and other provisions of the HITECH Act. His work developing a nationwide health information system and fostering the use of health IT has led to his being credited with putting into place one of the largest publicly funded infrastructure investments the nation has ever made in such a condensed timeframe. He currently serves as the president of The Commonwealth Fund, a national nonprofit focused on research in healthcare and social policy issues.

**Patricia Flatley Brennan, RN, PhD.** Dr. Brennan is a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing and the director of the Wisconsin Integrated Advanced Information Management System initiative, which aims to improve IT infrastructure in health sciences schools.

Her research focuses on how health IT can improve care delivery for patients with chronic conditions. She is known for championing the use of personal health records to help patients better engage in their care. She is the national program director for Project HealthDesign, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded initiative that promotes innovation in personal health technology.

**Jonathan Bush.** Mr. Bush is the co-founder, CEO and president of athenahealth, a vendor of cloud-based EHRs and related products. The company currently serves more than 38,000 providers and was [ranked](#) the top overall software vendor and top overall physician practice vendor in 2013 by KLAS Research.

In May, Mr. Bush released his first book, *Where Does It Hurt?: An Entrepreneur's Guide to Fixing Health Care*. In it, he shares his ideas on how to use technology to transform healthcare delivery for the better.

**Arthur Davidson, MD.** Dr. Davidson currently serves as the director of public health informatics at Denver Public Health and is a principle investigator of Colorado's State and Regional Demonstration Project, an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality-backed initiative to improve data sharing and interoperability.

Dr. Davidson lent his expertise to the formation of the Colorado Regional Health Information Organization, a statewide HIE. All of the state's [hospitals](#) with more than 100 beds and all the state's [large medical labs](#) are currently members of CORHIO.

He currently serves on the meaningful use workgroup of the ONC's Health IT Policy Committee.

**Karen DeSalvo, MD.** Dr. DeSalvo currently serves as National Coordinator for Health IT, overseeing all ONC activities and promoting the use of health IT throughout the country.

Prior to her appointment in December 2013, she served as the New Orleans Health Commissioner and New Orleans Mayor Mitchell Landrieu's senior health policy advisor. As Health Commissioner, she created an innovative model of neighborhood-based primary care to improve care access following Hurricane Katrina. She is also the founder and former president of 504HealthNet, an organization of safety-net providers in the New Orleans area. Prior to this, she served as president of the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum and the National Association of Chiefs of General Internal Medicine.

**Judith Faulkner.** Ms. Faulkner founded Epic Systems in 1979. Epic is currently one of the nation's largest electronic health record vendors — once all organizations currently under an Epic contract complete installing their systems, half of all Americans will have an Epic health record. Ms. Faulkner, who has a background in math and computer science, coded the original Epic software. As president and CEO of Epic, she was named "The Most Powerful Woman in Health Care" by *Forbes* magazine in 2012 and is one of the few self-made women on the magazine's list of billionaires.

**Naomi Fried, PhD.** Dr. Fried is Boston Children's Hospital's first chief innovation officer. She is currently building the hospital's Innovation Acceleration Program, which aims to bring a culture of creativity and innovation to the organization and facilitate the discoveries that will help Boston Children's succeed in the new healthcare industry.

In her previous position as vice president of innovation and technology at Oakland, Calif.-based Kaiser Permanente, she chaired the internal Innovation Fund for Technology, oversaw the creation of a telemedicine workgroup and was involved in the creation and launch of the organization's Innovation Laboratory.

**John Halamka, MD.** Dr. Halamka began serving as CIO of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston in 1998. He is also CIO and Dean for Technology at Harvard Medical School and a practicing emergency physician.

His research focuses on security and confidentiality issues, scalability issues and implementation of standards for exchange of administrative and clinical information. As a clinician, Dr. Halamka uses his research to improve the care of the patients he treats in BIDMC's emergency department. He is also an active teacher, lecturing on both medical and technology topics at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In addition to his role as CIO, Dr. Halamka is also chairman of the New England Health Electronic Data Interchange Network, CEO of regional health information organization MA-SHARE and chair of the U.S. Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel.

**Elizabeth Casey Halley, RN.** Ms. Halley is a principal at the Center for Transforming Health, a federally funded research and development center. She is an expert on nursing and health IT, and has presented and written extensively on the topic.

She has also championed health IT exchange standards, and has led the ONC's Consolidated Health Informatics initiative, which aims to create exchange standards among the nation's EHRs. Throughout her career, she has collaborated on health IT efforts with HHS and CMS, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Agency and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.

Ms. Halley currently serves on the HIMSS board of directors.

**Michael L. Hodgkins, MD.** Dr. Hodgkins serves as CMIO of the American Medical Association, where he is responsible for crafting the AMA's overall health IT strategy. He is largely focused on how to design and implement health IT systems as to provide maximum benefit for clinicians.

He also sits on the board of Healthway, the national HIE.

**George Hripcsak, MD.** Dr. Hripcsak is the director of medical informatics services at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, the chair of Columbia University's department of biomedical informatics, senior informatics adviser to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the co-chair of the ONC's Health IT Policy Committee's meaningful use workgroup.

His research focuses on how the information stored in EHRs can be best mined and used, concentrating specifically on discovery methods, natural language processing, data evaluation and clinical demonstration.

Dr. Hripcsak spearheaded the creation of the Arden Syntax, a language used for representing and sharing medical information that has since become the national standard.

**Christoph U. Lehmann, MD.** Dr. Lehmann is the founding medical director of the Child Health Informatics Center, part of the American Academy of Pediatrics. He is also a professor of pediatrics and biomedical informatics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. He currently serves as a member of the Health IT Policy Committee.

Dr. Lehmann's research focuses on pediatric medication monitoring, and he is the developer of several clinical safety apps designed to reduce medication errors. He is the author of more than 90 published works and currently edits the journal *Applied Clinical Informatics*.

**Ed Marx.** Mr. Marx is senior vice president and CIO of Texas Health Resources in Arlington, one of the largest faith-based, nonprofit healthcare delivery systems in the United States and the largest in North Texas in terms of patients served. He has served in his current role since 2010.

Under Mr. Marx's leadership, Texas Health Resources received the 2013 HIMSS Enterprise Davies Award, which recognizes the use of health IT and electronic health records to improve healthcare delivery and patient safety, and achieve a demonstrated return on investment. The 14 hospitals in the Texas Health system are either at Stage 6 or Stage 7 on the HIMSS Analytics Electronic Medical Record Adoption Model, as well.

Along with these organizational achievements, Mr. Marx has received professional recognition on an individual scale. He is the recipient of HIMSS' 2013 John E. Gall Jr. CIO of the Year Award, which recognizes health IT executives who have made significant contributions to their organizations and demonstrated innovative leadership through effective use of technology.

**Michael Matthews.** Mr. Matthews is the CEO of inHEALTH, a clinically integrated delivery network in Richmond, Va., as well as the CEO of MedVirginia, a regional health information exchange that was the first in the country to connect online with federal agencies. He is also the president and chair of Healthway, the national HIE.

Mr. Matthews has been a leader in several important research projects related to HIEs, such as the Medicare Coordinated Care Demonstration and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Call For Health Network Project. In 2010, he won the eHealth Advocate of the Year award from the eHealth Initiative.

**Ronald Merrell, MD.** Dr. Merrell is the director of the Medical Informatics and Technology Applications Consortium, located on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and sponsored by NASA. The center tests telemedicine capabilities for human space flight needs as well as helps to bring the technology to market.

Dr. Merrell has been a telemedicine pioneer, one of the first to use Internet-based telemedicine and Internet-enabled remote intraoperative consultation. Earlier this month, he was awarded the American Telemedicine Association President's Award for the Advancement of Telemedicine.

**Blackford Middleton, MD.** Dr. Middleton is the assistant vice chancellor for health affairs, chief informatics officer and professor of biomedical informatics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. He previously served as corporate director of clinical informatics research and development at Partners HealthCare in Boston and medical director of information management and technology at Stanford (Calif.) University Medical Center.

Dr. Middleton is the current chairman of the American Medical Informatics Association board of directors, and has previously chaired HIMSS. He is widely published and has given presentations nationally on clinical decision support, EHRs and policy issues.

**Farzad Mostashari, MD.** Dr. Mostashari serves as a visiting fellow to the Brookings Institute's Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform, a role in which he advises on payment reform and delivery system transformation.

Dr. Mostashari was previously the National Coordinator for Health IT from April 2011 through October 2013. In that role, he oversaw a dramatic increase in the adoption of EHRs among hospitals, going from 9 percent to 44 percent. He also led the implementation of the HITECH Act, which included the design and development of the meaningful use program and the state health information exchange cooperative agreements, among other programs and projects.

Before his role as national coordinator, Dr. Mostashari served as principal deputy national coordinator and senior advisor at the ONC from 2009 through 2011. He previously served as assistant commissioner for New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's primary care information project and epidemiology services. He also previously worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as an epidemic intelligence service officer, in which he was a lead investigator for the 1999 West Nile virus outbreak.

**Geeta Nayyar, MD.** Dr. Nayyar is currently the CMIO for patient engagement solutions vendor PatientPoint. Previously, she was AT&T's first CMIO, where she guided the development of the company's ForHealthSM program and overall mHealth strategy.

She is currently on HIMSS' board of directors and is a member of the medical school faculty at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

**Neal Patterson.** Mr. Patterson is the co-founder, chairman and CEO of EHR vendor Cerner. Founded in 1979, the company is now the world's largest independent health IT company, with revenues in excess of \$2.5 billion per year.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Patterson has focused on constantly developing new software to better meet clients' needs. Under his leadership, the company has invested more than \$3 billion in research and development.

Mr. Patterson was recently appointed to the Health IT Policy Committee.

**Cris Ross.** Mr. Ross came to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., as CIO in 2010 after serving Surescripts, where he led the company's interoperability business as executive vice president and general manager of clinical interoperability. Prior to joining Surescripts, Mr. Ross served as CIO and then executive vice president of product and information services at MinuteClinic during a period of rapid growth, as the retail clinic expanded from 60 to 650 clinics.

Mr. Ross has led multiple efforts to use health IT to expand Mayo's influence to more patients and physicians, ranging from a variety of consumer-facing apps to remote consults with Mayo specialists.

**Leslie Saxon, MD.** Dr. Saxon is the founder and executive director of the University of Southern California Center for Body Computing in Los Angeles. The center researches, develops and promotes digital and wireless health solutions that improve overall health and wellness and increase access to care.

The CBC focuses on cross-disciplinary research, bringing experts from engineering, business, cinema and the arts and other fields together to create solutions that make the most of available technology to improve users' quality of life.

Dr. Saxon is also part of the Boston Scientific ALTITUDE project, which studies remote monitoring devices and works with medical device companies to help optimize wearable technologies for patients with cardiac conditions.

**Rasu Shrestha, MD.** Dr. Shrestha is the vice president for medical information technology and the medical director of interoperability and imaging informatics at Pittsburgh-based UPMC. He has made significant gains in "un-siloing" UPMC's 4 terabytes of data to improve the quality of information available to physicians at the point of care.

A radiologist by training, he was also one of the chief architects of SingleView, a first-of-its-kind system developed in house to present radiologists and other providers with a standardized view of a patient's imaging studies across all UPMC care sites.

**Paul Tang, MD.** Dr. Tang is currently the vice president, chief innovation officer and CTO at the Palo Alto (Calif.) Medical Foundation, where he directs the David Druker Center for Health Systems Innovation, and is also a professor of medicine at Stanford (Calif.) University.

Dr. Tang is a member of the ONC's Health IT Policy Committee and a member of the Institute of Medicine. He has served with various other industry organizations, including the National Institutes of Health, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, and Computer Science and Technology Board.

His medical informatics research focuses on the relationship between EHRs, personal health records and care quality. He presents regularly before industry groups.

**Eric J. Topol, MD.** Dr. Topol is the founder and director of the Scripps Translational Science Institute in San Diego, a Scripps Health research facility that seeks ways to personalize medicine through genomics and personal monitoring devices and other technologies. He is also the chief academic officer at Scripps Health and the chair of innovative medicine at the Scripps Research Institute.

He recently co-founded the West Wireless Health Institute as a sister organization to the STSI. This organization focuses exclusively on the use of wireless technologies to improve population health, especially among patients with chronic diseases.

**Michael H. Zaroukian, MD, PhD.** Dr. Zaroukian currently serves as CMIO of Sparrow Health System in Lansing, Mich. He is also a professor of medicine at Michigan State University in Lansing.

Previously, he served as CMIO of MSU from 2005 to 2011 and as electronic health record medical director at MSU from 2002 to 2004. Throughout his career, he has been an advocate for the expansion and adoption of health IT, lecturing and hosting workshops on the subject as well as participating in industry groups such as the American Medical Association Health IT Advisory Group and the HIMSS Enterprise Information Systems Committee.

Dr. Zaroukian has also helped shape national health IT policy. He was one of a select group of experts invited to the White House by President Obama in 2012 to discuss ways to foster health IT adoption. He currently serves on the meaningful use workgroup of the ONC's Health IT Policy Committee.