The transition to value-based care has sparked significant advancements in how health systems and care teams process, store and analyze data. Despite these advancements, the healthcare industry continues to struggle with medical information sharing and making patient data available across health systems. Interoperability is one of the biggest challenges facing healthcare today, and offers reasons to be optimistic for the future of health information technology.

The ONC defines interoperability as “the ability of systems to exchange and use electronic health information from other systems without special effort on the part of the user.” According to HIMSS, such systems can:

1. Put clinical data in the hands of doctors when and where they need it.
2. Support care coordination, which is critical when patients see multiple care team members.

The U.S. GAO lists 5 key challenges related to achieving interoperability:

1. Legislation
2. Stakeholder cooperation
3. Technological advancement
4. Insufficient standards
5. Varied regulations

It will take a combination of legislation, stakeholder cooperation and technological advancement for the healthcare industry to achieve widespread interoperability. The ONC “roadmap” calls for nationwide interoperability by 2024. Meanwhile, today:

• Many of the nation’s largest health systems, as well as EHR vendors representing 90% of the U.S. market, have pledged to:

1. Increase patient access to healthcare information
2. Improve data exchange
3. Harmonize clinical data
4. Increase patient access to health IT
5. Enhance electronic interoperability standards

As the pursuit of interoperability in healthcare continues, there are reasons to believe success is within reach.