

Grasso leads technical team's response to HHS HIV/AIDS Bureau announcement

Stevens Healthcare IT Management Advisory Board member proposes technical solution for enhancing access to and retention in quality HIV care for women of color

HOBOKEN, N.J. Dr. S. Vincent Grasso, a member of the Stevens Healthcare Information Technology Management Advisory Board was selected to lead the technical team on a \$5-million dollar grant application to develop a HIPAA compliant, web-based data entry and reporting platform.

The grant was submitted to the Health Research Services Administration for the creation of an Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for HIV Women of Color. The grant proposal brings together a broad range of subject matter experts from clinical and academic medicine, research, technology, finance and public policy.

Citing President Barack Obama's vision of improving quality healthcare to all Americans, the team is responding to a call from the Department of Health and Human Services' HIV/AIDS Bureau.

The issue is of particular importance, the group says, based on recent HIV data released by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to the August 2008 report:

- * Women accounted for 26 percent of the estimated 37,163 diagnoses for adults and adolescents.
- * Of the 126,964 women living with HIV/AIDS, 64 percent were black, 19 percent were white, 15 percent were Hispanic, 1 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and less than 1 percent were American Indian or Alaska Native.
- * The rate of AIDS diagnosis for black women (45.5/100,000 women) was approximately 23 times the rate for white women (2.0/100,000) and four times the rate for Hispanic women (11.2/100,000).
- * An estimated 95,959 women were living with AIDS, representing 23% of the estimated 421,873 people living with AIDS in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The 2005 census showed that black and Hispanic women represent 24 percent of all US women. However, women in these two groups accounted for 82 percent of the estimated total of AIDS diagnoses for women. Risk factors involved in this trend include but are not limited to a younger age at diagnosis, lack of recognition of a partner's risk factors, high risk heterosexual risk factors, substance abuse, socioeconomic issues, racial/ethnic differences and other multiple risk factors.

"Women of color have had a higher incidence of HIV/AIDS diagnosis as compared to their Caucasian counterparts since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in 1981 due to a wide range of interrelated factors," said Grasso. "These risk factors are also responsible for decreasing the efficiency and effectiveness of care they receive, due in part to a less than optimal technology solution at the many HIV/AIDS clinics."

With the adoption of new technologies, the healthcare community faces increasing challenges with regard to security and patient privacy and assembled members of the teams are eager to begin this most important task.

"It stands to reason that delivering a technical solution ahead of schedule would be a major step forward in disseminating best of breed solutions to the masses affordably," said J. Anthony Forstmann, managing partner, Forstmann & Co.

Henry A. Hill, general manager of ION Networks said, "We are pleased the award-winning line of ION secure remote management products will be leveraged in this ambitious effort to improve patient care."

"I look forward to being involved in this research, analyzing the related network traffic data from the perspective of optimization and security. Hopefully, this work will translate into better care for these patients," said Brian Moriarty, Director of Stevens Research Computing Information Technology.

"This grant application represents not only a partnership of a vanguard medical organization like Montefiore with Stevens, but the teaming of some extraordinary individuals, as reflected by the roster of participants from both organizations. By dedicating these combined resources to some very deserving objectives, we once again our demonstrating to the Metropolitan NY/NJ Community that Stevens means business in maximizing our technological and educational resources in the pursuit of taking good care of our region's healthcare," said Dr. Don Lombardi, Director of the Stevens Healthcare Educational Partnerships (SHEP).

Grasso is the executive vice president for Healthcare with LGS Global Ltd., a Hyderabad-based public IT company. He completed his medical training at Des Moines University, his surgical residency at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine Manhattan Program, Post Doctoral Fellowship in Advanced Laparoscopic Surgery within the Department of General and Endoscopic Surgery at the Yale University School of Medicine, and Medical Informatics research and development as a NASA Project Manager within the Yale University NASA Commercial Space Center for Medical Informatics and Technology Applications.

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