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April 10, 2013

Arien Malec
Vice President, Strategy
Oakland, CA
Sent via email to: arien.malec@rel

Dear Arien:

The Society for Participatory Medicine (SPM) is devoted to promoting a health care system in which networked patients become responsible drivers of their health and providers value them as full partners. For that reason, we are writing to you in your role as one of the senior leaders of the new CommonWell Health Alliance.

While SPM applauds the alliance's commitment to health care data "interoperability for the common good," we nonetheless have two important concerns. First, we are deeply committed to giving patients the ability to directly access their medical information. Interoperability may be a "cornerstone" of health care, as your website puts it, but it is only an enabler. In order to achieve the long-standing public policy goal of patient-centered care, health information technology must enable provider-patient partnership through data access. We call on the alliance to clarify how it plans to achieve this goal and where it stands on your priority list.

Our second concern is an apparent lack of openness in the CommonWell process. The alliance is grappling with important problems related to unique patient identification, a record locator mechanism and associated issues of consent and privacy. Yet CommonWell has not promised an open discussion, even as it asks non-profit associations to let the alliance publish their name and logos as supporters. As an organization committed to true partnership among all stakeholders in health care, SPM calls on the alliance to openly commit to open deliberations.

The Society commends CommonWell for tackling the critical interoperability challenge, and we look forward to a dialogue on our concerns that will pave the way for us to work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Krug", written in a cursive style.

Sarah Krug
President