

The Digital Bridge initiative has the potential to leave a lasting impact on the way patient data is shared. Through successful collaboration, the partners involved each bring unique perspectives on the solution to effective data exchange that will lead to enhanced population health. The Digital Bridge Perspectives blog series features Q&A installments from governance body members reflecting on the influence this collaborative could have and the challenges it addresses.

The first installment shares insights from Richard Paskach, senior director of research project operations, informatics and technology at HealthPartners, representing the health care stakeholder group.

### **As a health care provider, what has been your role in advancing Digital Bridge?**

My role is to bring the voice of the provider community into the conversation and decision making process of Digital Bridge. As a representative of a consumer-governed, co-operative health care organization, the health, voice and safety of the patient are central to my work. This voice is oddly overlooked in efforts to implement programs to improve health in our communities. I also try to bring the realities of what the provider community faces in implementing many of the policies and regulations of public health.

### **In what ways do you think Digital Bridge will enhance your ability to provide patient care?**

Digital Bridge will enhance our care in a number of ways. Primarily, the collaborative itself will build a greater understanding—for me and many others—of the role that public health plays as a partner in the care for our patients. This partnership is not always clearly defined and can be lost in the everyday pursuit of delivering quality care to the patients we serve. The use of technology in identifying reportable cases, gathering case data and reporting those cases to our partners in public health is a significant improvement over the current state. The eCR project has considerable potential to reduce administrative effort to accomplish this reporting and make it more accurate and timely.

### **What core challenge does Digital Bridge help address?**

By bringing together the various public health agencies, electronic health record (EHR) vendors, and health care, Digital Bridge is able to create an approach that will benefit all parties in public health reporting and data availability. By aggregating the data needs of public health in a comprehensive data specification, we are much more likely to be able to develop a system that is comprehensive, secure and efficient in providing needed information to public health. The “one-off” requests for data by various agencies is expensive and complicates our ability to fully meet the objectives of public health. Focusing on the patients we serve, Digital Bridge will help

us to more quickly assess potential risks to community health and collaborate more effectively to address those risks.

**What are the long-term outcomes you hope to gain from partnering with the other members of the Digital Bridge collaborative?**

It is important to build on the partnerships begun with electronic case reporting (eCR). This forum has helped all parties involved to build a better understanding of the challenges each of us faces in caring for patients. We share a goal to improve health and save lives. By continuing this work, we have an opportunity to drive real change in how health care is delivered and coordinated throughout the United States.

**What elements and/or characteristics of Digital Bridge excite you? What is the next step?**

This collaborative has built relationships and partnerships that can be used to improve our ability to act quickly to tackle issues as they arise. Knowing that we can use a partnership like Digital Bridge to address issues such as maternal health, vaccine rates, diabetes, opioid use disorder, or emerging threats such as Zika is exciting. We can use this technology to better so many lives. Knowing the potential of this work inspires me to help it succeed.