

# Choosing the Future

*Critical Information for Critical Times, Edition of Wednesday, September 16, 2015*



## **Big Data's Big Blind Spot**

According to [Healthcare IT News](#), 54% of hospitals surveyed are dissatisfied with their electronic health record and 20% are “actively looking to replace” their electronic health record vendors.

The amount of money hospitals are spending to comply with the EHR mandate is mind boggling. The University of Illinois at Chicago reports that U.S. EMR/EHR spending in 2015 will reach \$6 billion. Boston-based Partners Healthcare alone is investing \$1.2 billion in the technology, dwarfing Duke University's previously reported \$700 million expenditure for its EHR.

Spending for healthcare-related technology is growing at an annual rate of 16 percent.

Years ago, I was lucky enough to witness a conversation that is germane to the topic. About the time I started my consulting practice, Wyndham Roberts (“Mr. Roberts”), the respected dean of weather forecasters in central Illinois, announced his retirement. Upon the occasion, a television reporter asked him to look back over his long career, think about all the technological progress he had seen, and comment on its impact on weather forecasting. I will never forget his response.

After reflecting for a moment, Roberts smiled at the reporter and said, “Well, to tell you the truth, I think we did a better job back when we used to ask truckers what was coming up behind them on the Interstate.”

Roberts understood something that hospital governing bodies, management teams, and policy makers would do well to consider.

1. Data are not information.
2. Information is not understanding
3. Understanding is not a solution.

That logical sequence is as true today as it was when it was first written more than 30 years ago. Because of the stakes, it is even more important today. Today's technology truly is dazzling and, properly employed, very empowering. The ability to manipulate incredible amounts of data at the speed of light is among the factors that encourage “health planners” to believe they are capable of managing “population health”. They really do not understand that they are swimming against the tide of history. As the saying goes, “Eyes are useless if the mind is blind.”

The world has changed. Giant centrally managed organizations are going the way of the dinosaurs and for many of the same reasons. Ironically, the same computing power that leads central planners to believe they can manage impossibly gargantuan tasks has rendered them and their massive organizations unnecessary and uncompetitive. Information and communications technology enables small, locally-based, decentralized entities to provide very high quality patient care with a human touch at lower costs and greater responsiveness to the needs of those being served. The writing is on the wall.



7667 N.W. Prairie View Road, Suite 204  
Kansas City, Missouri 64151  
(816) 587-2120  
<http://bradyinc.com>