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Report to the President on [Transforming Health Care Through Information Technology](), February 9, 2001

Transmittal Letter to the President

President's Information Technology Advisory Committee

February 9, 2001

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The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

During the past year, the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC) has focused much of its attention on providing a vision for information technology's role in helping to drive progress in the 21st century. As part of this effort, we established several panels to examine specific issues, including a panel to review the ways in which information technology can transform health care and increase access to care for all citizens. The Federal government has a critical role to play in driving this progress, which PITAC has outlined in our report enclosed with this letter, ***Transforming Health Care Through Information Technology***.

Information technology provides many exciting applications for the health sector, such as computer-aided surgery, the use of telesensing methods to examine patients from their homes, and patient/doctor interaction via the Internet and digital medical libraries. Information technology tools can provide the health care sector with unprecedented productivity and quality of care if there is a strategic vision and adequate research to ensure success. **However, PITAC found that at present the U.S. lacks a broadly disseminated and accepted national vision for information technology in health care**. In addition, the biomedical community, including the Federal agencies, is not focused on the basic, long-term information technology research required to provide the community with the state of the art tools necessary to take full advantage of the Information Age.

In order to rectify this situation, PITAC strongly recommends that the

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) outline its vision for using information technology to improve health care in this country and devote the necessary resources to do the basic information technology research critical to accomplishing these goals in the long term. Further, DHHS should appoint a senior information technology leader to provide strategic leadership across DHHS and focus on the importance of information technology in addressing pressing problems in health care. We further recommend four ways that the information technology/health care nexus can be accomplished:

- First, pilot projects and Enabling Technology centers should be established to extend the practical uses of information technology to health care systems and biomedical research;
- Second, a scalable national computing infrastructure should be provided to support the biomedical research community;
- Third, Congress should enact legislation that assures sound practices for managing personally identifiable health information of any kind; and
- And fourth, programs should be established to increase the pool of biomedical research and health care professionals with training at the intersection of health and information technology.

We hope that these recommendations will represent a major step toward realizing the potential of information technology to increase every American's access to quality health care. PITAC looks forward to working with you, your Administration, and members of Congress to help dramatically improve our health care system through the use of information technology tools. As PITAC strives to provide sound, well-researched advice, we hope that you and members of your Administration will feel free at any time to discuss these and other important issues with members of the committee.

Sincerely,

Raj Reddy, Ph.D.   Irving Wladawsky-Berger, Ph.D.
PITAC, Co-Chair   PITAC, Co-Chair

Enclosure