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Thought Leader's Corner

Each month, *Medical Home News* asks a panel of industry experts to discuss a topic of interest to the medical home community. To suggest a topic, send it to us at info@medicalhomenews.com.

In a May 2009 report for the California HealthCare Foundation entitled Health Care without the Doctor: How New Devices and Technologies Aid Clinicians and Consumers, Mary-Kate Scott poses a series of key questions at the end regarding these technologies. With permission from the Foundation and the author, Medical Home News has reframed the first question as the July Thought Leader question of the month. The report is at: <http://www.chcf.org/topics/view.cfm?itemid=133938>.

Q: “What are the opportunities for mid level clinicians and consumers to use new diagnosis and monitoring technologies to expand access, improve quality, and reduce costs in health care? What are the safety, effectiveness, and appropriateness issues in this debate?”

“New diagnostic and monitoring technologies exist today and are being applied – but not nearly as commonly as needed to radically improve care and eliminate unnecessary healthcare costs. In a well designed system, people with chronic conditions such as heart disease or diabetes can transmit their vital signs seamlessly from home to their healthcare professionals and get real-time feedback on their condition. This alone could eliminate many emergency room visits and substantially reduce preventable rehospitalizations. Surgery patients can be transferred more quickly out of overcrowded and expensive hospital rooms for carefully monitored rehabilitation at home or other facilities. Professional caregivers and loved ones can more accurately monitor and coach post-surgery or chronic disease patients. To achieve this goal, a rich and varied ecosystem of personal medical devices must be fully interoperable with each other and other information sources. By providing the necessary technical information to build and design interoperable healthcare products and services, Continua Health Alliance is spurring a global telehealth innovation through the collaborative efforts of more than 200 leading technology, medical device manufacturers and healthcare member companies.”



Rick Crossen
President and Chair of the Board of Directors
Continua Health Alliance
Beaverton, OR

“The ACC is a strong advocate for the systematic application of evidence-based guidelines and appropriate use criteria at the point of care. Embedding these decision-support tools in electronic health records or in a Web-based application could help clinicians across the spectrum determine “when to do” and “how often to do” a given procedure in the context of scientific evidence, the local health care environment, and the patient’s clinical situation. On the consumer front, the ACC is piloting ways to increase primary and secondary prevention through the development of tools to monitor and encourage patient adherence to medications, as well as patient involvement and understanding of cardiovascular disease and the impact of lifestyle choices. For example, our patient education portal, CardioSmart, offers an online blood pressure monitoring tool to assist patients in maintaining the optimal blood pressure level, which can then be submitted to their health care provider. With the exciting array of new and increasingly interactive home diagnostic and monitoring tools, patients will be able to take charge of their health and improve it as true partners with clinical teams.”



Jack Lewin, MD
CEO
American College of Cardiology
Washington, DC

“There will be a heightened focus on value in evaluating and adopting diagnostic and monitoring technologies. With expected shifts in payment structures to focus on episodes of care and performance, the look at what technologies provide value in providing quality care across the continuum, improve outcomes and experience for the consumer, and decrease demand and cost on the healthcare system will take on greater importance. Midlevel providers facilitating the integration of the care of consumers via the use of information coming out of these diagnostic and monitoring technologies will be key to achieving some of the goals set forth in President Obama's health reform plan. There is a huge opportunity for both improved care and cost saving but whether funding will enable this movement will be crucial.”



Barbara Harvath, RN
President, Harvath Health Associates
Former Senior Advisor, HealthTech
San Francisco, CA

Thought Leader's Corner ...continued

"If we are to have an impact on our huge chronic care costs, we need self-care management applications with three critical attributes: continuous, tailored, and actionable. First, continuous monitoring and automatic recording of biometric data needs to be delivered wirelessly to a clinician or health coach. A tailored, personalized instruction is then sent back from the clinician/health coach, and in an actionable form. This cycle of monitor-analyze-tailor-action empowers patients, and over time helps them achieve optimal outcomes. The system is enabled through Bluetooth wireless standards, the adoption of broadband to the home, medical devices that incorporate communications standards, and engaged clinicians and patients with aligned incentives.

Not all health citizens or clinicians will participate in the early phase of this innovation; over time, however, with proof of concept and social networking among both clinicians and patients (on- and off-line), the model will be adopted. We can look to pilots and programs already operating at the Center for Connected Health in Boston, at Intel, in Microsoft, and other innovative sites. Watch for innovators who come from outside of the health industry, too, to bring these applications into health care."



Jane Sarasohn-Kahn, MA, MHSA
THINK-Health
Author, Health Populi Blog
Philadelphia, PA

"As our aging population grows, overburdening our healthcare system, better ways to oversee care for those with chronic disease is critical. There are rapidly expanding opportunities for improved access to and quality of care and dramatic cost reductions through health information technologies (HIT). These technologies have the unique ability to dramatically increase collaboration and communication between providers, patients and care teams, including family members. When technology is used to monitor daily clinical status and behaviors, and incentives are provided for clinicians to deliver care with these technologies, we can see dramatic cost savings. Some programs have shown 40% - 60% reductions in hospitalizations.

These technologies and care processes lead to the need for a new role – care coordinators – mid-level clinicians, such as nurses, pharmacists, etc., with clinical training, to more efficiently monitor populations. However, the physician must play a key role because chronic illness is treated with medical therapy, and treatment plans need continuous adjustment. HIT is crucial to creating efficiencies and reducing errors and duplicative care, but it will only work broadly if it is simple, low cost, rapidly scalable, and specifically targeted to improve care collaboration and quality."



Randall Williams, MD, FACC
CEO
Pharos Innovations
Northfield, IL

"In the early days of the disease management industry we recognized that the behavioral impediments to adherence were far greater than what you could achieve by just reminding people to do things with "smart" technology.

The same is true today as we now have such sophisticated devices as implanted cardiac defibrillators and insulin pumps. We really need to help people understand why it was important to take their drugs and follow their physician's treatment plan. Once they understand that, then reminding becomes an important aspect of the program for those who need it.

Because we have made so much progress in terms of behavior modification, these tools become much more relevant. They fit into an existing framework in which they can be used in a targeted way for those people who need to have reminders and who need to be alerted after they've become activated. The technology and the support go hand in hand in achieving safety and effectiveness."



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National Audioconference on Non-Clinical Workers in the Medical Home
May 28, 2009 · Audioconference CD Available
www.medicalhomeaudioconferences.com/MedHome20090528/registration.html