Vision for a Connected Health Future

Realizing A Patient-First Healthcare Revolution

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Amid skyrocketing costs and fragmentation, the healthcare industry has reached a turning point. It is both an industry in crisis and an industry on the brink of transformation.

Many point to health information technology as the essential driver of the healthcare revolution. Yet technology is only part of the story. The true promise of transformation goes beyond the technology itself. It rests in technology as an enabler of a connected health future with an advanced standard of care where patients come first.

An ecosystem in trouble

The healthcare environment is made up of patients and families, primary care physicians, specialists, community hospitals, academic medical centers, public health organizations, labs, pharmacies and healthcare payers, among others.

This environment is aptly called a "healthcare ecosystem." While each member has a distinct role, all interact with one another in an interdependent network. Like a natural ecosystem, any disruptions or disconnections threaten more than just one member—they threaten the balance of the entire system.

Unfortunately, today's healthcare ecosystem is more disconnected than ever. Patient data is scattered in siloed systems, which impedes the information exchange essential to getting a patient's full health picture. In essence, the healthcare system has become estranged from patients. Care has turned inward, centered on a broken and increasingly cumbersome system, rather than on the patients themselves.

Making the right connections

Healing the disconnections between patients and the system—and among all members of the healthcare community—is fundamental to improving healthcare worldwide.

Meeting this goal will mean more than introducing a digital infrastructure. A "build it and they will come" approach simply does not go far enough. Healthcare transformation demands an evolution in true care coordination powered by the electronic flow of health information across the continuum of care. While connected health starts with a digital infrastructure, it is ultimately more about what happens next. Connected health demands looking beyond the infrastructure as an end in itself and seeing it as a means to deliver never-before-seen healthcare value.

It is about improving care delivery performance, enhancing patient-provider-payer interactions and driving innovation to advance standards of care. The ultimate outcome? Better healthcare cost, quality and access for everyone.

Unleashing new value

Connected health can recenter the system around the patient. It has the potential to deliver significant value, helping the healthcare organizations to:

- Access a complete longitudinal view of patient data—anywhere, anytime.

- Incorporate clinical data into care plan dialogues among healthcare stakeholders.

- Transmit patient discharge plans electronically to receiving care settings.

- Eliminate duplicate testing and imaging.

• Consulting • Technology • Outsourcing

A Connected Health Lifestyle

Imagine this scenario—one that is next to impossible in most countries today. John breaks his leg on a ski vacation. He is rushed to the nearest emergency room, thousands of miles from home. The doctors immediately access his medical history and get him into surgery without delay or time consuming paperwork.

In recovery, John contacts his primary care physician, who has already seen yesterday's x-rays, knows how the surgery went and has set up referrals to an orthopedist and physical therapist for next week. On John's request, his doctor sends a prescription for pain medicine to a pharmacy near the airport. The pharmacist checks for drug reactions with his current medicine.

After John and his wife pick up the prescription, a text message from the pharmacist reminds him when to take the first dose. With prior permission to access his personal health record, John's grown daughter has monitored his progress and decided to fly out for a visit to help her parents.

Before long, John is back on his feet again. His physical therapist comes to his house for weekly sessions, and e-mails his care team updates from her tablet computer. When John has a question, he sets up a video chat with his team. He can even connect with the resort town surgeons to thank them for making sure he'll be back on the slopes next season.

- Alert primary care physicians of care gaps at the point of care.
- Provide patient alert messaging via mobile devices to improve patient medication compliance and adherence.
- Treat chronic patients through home monitoring and the latest virtual care technologies.
- Monitor disease outbreaks via biosurveillance and send alerts to at-risk populations.
- Use aggregated data to facilitate medical research.
- Refer patients into payers' chronic disease management programs.
- Mine clinical data to reduce fraud and abuse and ensure payment integrity.

The road to connected health

The journey to these connected health benefits involves three phases. An organization's starting point depends on the current state of its policies, technologies and business processes.

1. Health IT adoption. The first phase is planning and building a digital foundation for patient data with decentralized approaches to data collection through electronic medical records and patient health records. A strong focus on change management and adoption is critical.

2. Health information exchange. By enabling data capture, organizations can then move to powering data liquidity, promoting health information exchange with strong governance to improve care coordination via better accessibility to higher quality, more structured data.

3. Value extraction. With a data foundation and secure exchange in place, insights can drive real value. Advanced analytics can better inform clinical decision making, population health management and new care delivery models such as virtual care, telemedicine and tools that empower health consumers.

Connected health transformation is a journey. The first step in getting started requires an understanding of where an organization is today—and where it wants to go tomorrow.

For more information

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