

Top Ten Consumer Benefits of Health Information Technology

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The Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Program (e.g. “Meaningful Use”) is an essential catalyst for improving the quality, safety and efficiency of care. Patients and families have already begun to experience early benefits, which will grow exponentially in coming years.

“Having the data in my hands during [my father’s] hospitalization allowed me to have intelligent conversations with his care team and prevent them from erroneously placing him on a medication he had stopped taking two years ago....”

— Beth Schindele, family caregiver¹

1. Anytime access to our own health information online

- ▶ Convenient access to real time information is essential for managing health and care for ourselves and our loved ones. It can reduce duplicate tests, improve medication management, and is something patients and caregivers want.²

2. The ability to securely send our health information where it’s needed

- ▶ The ability to securely download and send our health information to other providers, mobile apps, PHRs, or other secure places of our choosing is not only enormously beneficial to us for coordinating care, but also offers substantial cost savings by avoiding repeat tests and services.

3. Better coordinated care across providers

- ▶ Electronically sharing summaries of care for patient referrals or care transitions ensures direct provider-to-provider communication, increases patient safety, improves outcomes, and helps avoid unnecessary and duplicative services, thus reducing costs and addressing one of consumers’ primary frustrations with the health care system.

4. Modern, more efficient communication tools

- ▶ Secure email not only enables patients and caregivers to ask questions, share concerns, and provide pertinent information using the modern tools we use in all other areas of our lives, but also helps providers maximize their workflow efficiency.

5. Reminders for care are sent in the most effective and accessible ways

- ▶ Reminders about preventive and follow-up care support patients in our efforts to stay healthy. They help ensure appointments aren’t missed and recommended care is received, thus avoiding costly complications and helping providers maximize their efficiency.



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6. Safer, more effective medication management

- ▶ With 76% of Americans over age 60 taking two or more prescription drugs and 37% taking five or more,³ health IT can improve patient safety by evaluating potential drug-drug interactions, compensating for human errors in dosing, and eliminating mistakes caused by illegible handwriting.

7. Making care patient- and family-centered

- ▶ Patient and family engagement, honoring patients' care preferences, and recording whether a patient has an advanced directive is essential to ensuring that patients receive the care we need and want, and none of the care we don't.

8. Enhancing privacy and trust

- ▶ Security features of EHRs, such as encryption and audit logs offer unprecedented privacy protections. In addition, research shows that when patients and families experience tangible benefits of health IT, such as the ability to view their own health information online, their trust in these new technologies is strengthened.⁴

9. Addressing the causes of health disparities

- ▶ Health IT is an essential tool for reducing disparities in health and care. It enables providers to look at real-time data to assess how equitable their care is and whether certain patient groups have better or worse health outcomes. It also empowers and facilitates more engagement of underserved populations in the health care system.

10. Improving safety, effectiveness and cost of care through measurement

- ▶ Measuring the quality and cost of care is central to improving it. EHRs enable the kinds of measures necessary to truly make care better and more affordable, and improve the health of populations.

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1 Testimony of Christine Bechtel. 113th Congress, Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Health. Health Information Technologies: How Innovation Benefits Patients. March 20th, 2013. <http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Testimony-Bechtel-Health-Tech-Patient-Benefits-2013-3-20.pdf>

2 In a recent NPWF survey, among respondents who had online access to their medical record, 80% use it regularly. Almost half use it 3+ times per year, and 25% use it 7+ times per year. Survey report can be found at www.nationalpartnership.org/hit.

3 Gu Q, Dillon CF, Burt VL. "Prescription drug use continues to increase: U.S. prescription drug data for 2007-2008," accessed online <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db42.htm>

4 A recent survey by the National Partnership on consumer trust and value in health IT found a direct positive relationship between trust and value. Survey results can be found at www.nationalpartnership.org/hit.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at www.NationalPartnership.org.

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