



For Providers

By Mike Critelli

Patient-controlled personal health records help you in several important ways:

- They tell you all the care your patient has received, not just the care you have delivered;
- They supplement the patient's faulty and incomplete memory of both the care he or she has received, the medication he or she is taking, and the other information you would consider important in delivering the best possible care;
- With the permission of the patient, you can monitor whether the prescriptions you have written have been filled or renewed. You can monitor whether the patient is adhering to the treatment plan you have provided. You can also get a good understanding of what tools will tell you about the patient's daily activity, a cluster of information you cannot get today.

I am always amazed at the weak link in the doctor-patient relationship, the degree to which doctors have to depend on what the patient remembers when he or she is asked to complete a paper-based form after checking in. For someone visiting an office for the first time, the individual completes a medical history form, which is highly likely to be incomplete, since it is asking often about events that occurred decades ago. However, even for people visiting their regular physicians, we ask them to remember what has happened in between visits that can be months or years apart.

The revolutionary advances in data capture technology on such data points as weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose, and breathing capacity, as well as the data about physical activity, diet, and even sleep now allow physicians to capture so much more about a person's daily state of health in between visits than has ever been the case.

Why is this so important? The diagnosis and treatment of so many medical conditions depends on understanding what happened before and during the occurrence of the conditions. This is clearly the case with respect to infectious diseases, since tracing the source of the infectious disease bacteria or virus depends on reconstructing someone's activities in the hours and days before he or she experiences symptoms.

However, it is also true of chronic diseases as well. Subtle changes in diet or physical activity routines can make a big difference in someone's weight or their levels of blood sugar or cholesterol. Trying to determine what needs to change going forward requires clearer and more granular understanding of what has happened.

The main message of this essay is that healthcare providers do not manage the health of their patients, except in intermittent interventions. Our various healthcare systems are designed to depend on patient self-management systems, with the assistance of skilled professionals.

Dossia draws upon the wisdom and insight of the expert medical community, the feedback of tens of thousands of patients, and the support systems on which patients routinely draw. More importantly, it provides a personal health management system that meets the patient where he or she carries out daily living activities, and it uses language the patient understands.

What do providers tell us they fear when patients are equipped with detailed health and medical information?

Legal malpractice claims

Many practitioners have told me that their worst nightmare is a patient with a complete medical file who does not like a particular outcome and takes the file into the local malpractice attorney's office.

What's misguided about this concern?

- Patients sue doctors they dislike because they feel that the doctors did not care about them, or did not listen to them. Denying information to patients makes this problem worse, not better.
- If a patient wants to bring a claim, the attorneys will eventually get the complete record anyway.

The patient who demands inappropriate care

Many practitioners tell stories of patients who go online and find examples of treatments other than those recommended by the practitioners.

They are particularly concerned about patients who see a direct-to-consumer advertisement about a particular medication and who wants the doctor to write a prescription for that medication, regardless of whether it is appropriate. Many patients tell doctors that if they will not prescribe the drug, the patients will shop for someone who will.

This is a legitimate concern, but a patient-controlled personal health management system like Dossia can help considerably with this problem, as it can with the legal malpractice problem. It can clearly deliver messages that practitioners want patients to understand: medicine is often highly personalized.

Certainly, there are many routine treatments that will be uniformly delivered to patients with a standardized set of symptoms, but there are many cases in which treatment paths will vary, based on information unique to that patient. This is particularly the case with respect to cancer treatments, because the optimal treatment often depends on a genetic analysis of the tumor. Since tumors mutate over time, it is also the case that the treatment that worked six months ago may not work now.

The sooner patients understand that the practitioner has to make highly individualized judgments, the more likely it is that he or she will be responsive to what practitioner recommends, and the more the patient can serve as a partner in care management with the practitioner.

There is a mismatch between what is possible and what the patient believes to be possible.

Seemingly well-informed patients have expectations that the practitioners can accomplish more than is realistically possible. Practitioners try to prevent this by keeping patients less well informed, on the theory that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

The best remedy for a patient with an excessively ambitious set of expectations is a process by which the patient gets educated about what treatments can, and cannot, achieve. The Dossia Health Manager can be a very useful tool for delivering both expert and peer group content that, properly managed by your organization, can create a better informed patient whose expectations are better matched to what you can achieve.

In fact, a good online personal health management system can be a “Wow” factor in helping the patient see you delivering care better than what he and she had come to expect.

You are always better off with patients the more you make them partners in managing their care. Dossia is one tool among many in helping them understand what they need, and when, where, and how they need to do it. For example, the patient who not only knows what medications he or she is taking, but is aware of alerts, recalls, and side effects is far better than the patient who believes that the medication has no risks for him or her. Many poorly informed patients simply stop taking their medications, a fact you learn when you receive a call from the hospital that is addressing the acute care consequences of failing to adhere to the treatment plan you laboriously built for them.



Dossia - Empowering individuals to change health and healthcare

Dossia is an employer-led organization dedicated to improving health and healthcare in America by empowering individuals to make good health decisions and become more discerning healthcare consumers. Backed by some of the largest, most respected brands in the world - Applied Materials, AT&T, BP America, Inc., Cardinal Health, Intel, Pitney Bowes, sanofani-aventis, Vanguard Health Systems, NantWorks and Wal-Mart - Dossia's founding member companies have united under the common vision of changing healthcare.

The Dossia Health Management System makes individuals' aggregated health data actionable with customized applications brought together on a single intelligent platform to deliver personalized, data-driven solutions that enable users to get more value from healthcare spending, better manage chronic conditions and pursue a healthier lifestyle. Dossia integrates game and social dynamics, incentives and targeted messaging to foster sustained engagement and health behavior change, thereby offering long-term value to employers as well as their employees and families. Far too often employers overspend on health benefits for which they realize little value. The Dossia Health Management System is the solution for innovative employers that aim to rationalize their health benefits spending while engaging their employees as true partners in achieving high value healthcare.

For more information, visit www.dossia.org.

