Welcome to the digital age where everyone is presented with massive amounts of data and information on a daily basis. In the course of a day individuals must evaluate and make many decisions not only for ourselves, but for our families, friends, and loved ones.

Healthcare is undergoing transformative change. As the Baby Boomer population ages and people are remaining active later in life, the demand for healthcare services continues to rise. This demand places stress on the patient, caregivers, and organizations who manage and provide healthcare services.

Many healthcare organizations and providers alike strive for practicing care which focusing on the patient, not the disease, where the patient is treated as a unique person with different needs. The Patient-centered Medical Home is yet another term used to describe the focus that is the relationship and decision-making process between primary care and the patient, other providers, and family members.

Information and focusing on the patient must go hand-in-hand. After all, a patient’s health information must be available and accessible when and where it is needed to provide the best care possible. The delivery of accurate and complete information to the point of patient care is no easy task. Over the past several years, healthcare has undergone a major facelift with implementing new technology to create better health outcomes for patients. Examples of such technology updates can be found in physician’s offices and hospitals and include the electronic health record (EHR), patient portals, and the personal health record (PHR).

To make better decisions on the patient’s behalf, healthcare professionals are working to make certain important health information from various computer systems is available when seeing the patient. This information could be inside or outside their walls. Having electronic systems that “talk to each other” and are able to provide up-to-date health information is critical to delivering the right information at the right time. The EHR combined with the PHR and patient portal is just one example of how technology is used to help patients gain access and become more involved in their care.

Information captured during a hospital or physician office visit such as a lab test result could be sent to the EHR and combined with other important health information, such as a history and physical or radiology report. The information can then be sent to the patient’s PHR. The patient is now able to access their information through the patient portal using a secure login with password(s). The patient may also be able to send a secure message to the physician. There are many other features and advantages to using a PHR that includes, but not limited to, scheduling appointments, requesting a prescription refill, or receiving an alert to schedule a preventative examination (for example, a mammogram or prostate screening). Mobile devices such as smart phones or computer tablets are rapidly becoming a popular means to perform these functions.

There is a major push for patients to become actively involved in their own healthcare. In the healthcare setting, the health information management (HIM) professional can provide patients with education and guidance. HIM professionals can help patients be aware of and exercise their rights to:

- View, download or access their information
- Get a copy of their information
- Request a correction/update their information
- Request a restriction to their information (keep certain information from ever being released)
- Request an accounting of disclosures (a log of where certain information was released as defined by law)

Health Information Professionals Week is March 16–22, 2014. This national week of recognition highlights these professionals who work to provide accurate and available information in an environment of trust for you and your loved ones. Learn more about HIM professionals' roles in protecting your health information, and take an opportunity to thank them for a job well done!

Notes

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Reference


Quiz

1. True or False: Healthcare is undergoing transformative change.
2. True or False: Patient-centered care focuses on the patient.
3. True or False: Healthcare professionals are not working on capturing information from many different electronic systems.
4. True or False: Patients will not be able to use mobile devices to access their health information.
5. True or False: HIM Professionals can offer education and guidance on patients’ rights to their healthcare documentation.