Medical Data Storage for Patients

By Annaben Kazemi

EVER HEARD THE joke: "You know you're chronically ill when … your medical records take up several boxes and have to be brought in on a cart?" We laugh because there's truth in that statement for chronically ill patients. Yet, coordinating and keeping track of all those medical records can be cumbersome.

It's now estimated that 80 percent of health data has become unstructured, meaning it doesn't fit into nice rows and columns. Add to that the volume of records from several specialists and hospitals, and most patients with chronic illness have an enormous load of medical material to juggle. Fortunately, medical imaging technology has improved, providing a less burdensome way of storing all that information.

Electronic Medical Records vs. Electronic Health Records

Many physicians and clinics have begun offering electronic health records (EMRs) for their patients. EMRs contain the standard medical and clinical data gathered in one provider's office. However, the data stored in EMRs are not easily shared with providers outside of a practice. Should a member of patients' care teams need access to the data, EMRs oftentimes have to be printed out and delivered by mail.

Electronic Health Records (EHRs), on the other hand, offer a more comprehensive patient history and focus on the total health of the patient. Unlike EMRs, EHRs allow patients' health records to move with them — to other healthcare providers, specialists, hospitals, nursing homes and even across states.

Better Information Equals Improved Care

Healthcare is a team effort, and shared information supports that. In fact, research has shown that patients who are actively involved with providers in their healthcare delivery process discovered better results when they had electronic access to their medical histories. Because EHRs are single records that include complete, up-to-date and accurate health information, they can help improve the quality and safety of patient care by placing patients in a better position to work with providers to make good decisions about their care, whether during a routine office visit or in a medical emergency. For providers, having instant access to information about patients' medical histories, allergies and medications enables them to make better, faster and more-informed decisions, which is especially important if patients have serious or chronic medical conditions.

Confidentiality and Security

While there are many benefits of both EMRs and EHRs, there is a valid concern regarding safety. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) made safeguarding the confidentiality, integrity and availability of patient information a legal requirement. However, operational inefficiencies, compliance issues, identity theft and cyberattacks are still real concerns for both patients and providers. The healthcare industry faces a number of challenges in monitoring and implementing the safety of EHRs. These include combatting issues caused by bad recordkeeping and other technology-related problems that can have serious, devastating results.

Keeping Track of It All at Home

For patients who are uneasy about the safety of EHRs, there are many tools available to help them to both organize their records at home, as well as easily carry those records with them and have access to them any time. A few options include phone apps, cloud storage, remote servers and thumb drives. Patients should explore the many choices and determine which solution works best for them.

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Sources

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Directory of Medical Data Storage

MedXKey

Developed and reviewed by medical professionals, the MedXKey is a medical alert emergency medical record contained in a small flash drive. It stores up to 2 gigabytes of information such as a living will, medical power of attorney, X-rays and any other documents. The device is waterproof, can be used with a Mac or Windows computer and is readable without passwords.

MedInfo911, www.medinfo911.com

Medi-Chips

USB Medi-Chips are personal portable emergency medical records that store any type of medical files, including X-rays, CAT scans, EKGs, medications and more. The database software included helps to manage health records and can also hold a copy of a driver license, passport and social security card. It can be worn as a necklace, keychain, bracelet or credit card style. It plugs into any USB port on any operating system and is password-protected with encryption capabilities. It does require a Windows Interface, Mac dual boot or Windows emulation software. The company provides live chat and telephone support 24/7/365.

PPEMR Inc.,
www.personalportableelectronicmedicalrecords.com/Home.html

iPHER

The iPHER, an Individual Personal Health Electronic Record, is a small device that plugs into a computer through a USB drive. Each iPHER carries inside the unique Patient Practitioner's program, a self-contained medical recordkeeping database system that will store the medical records of a single individual, including EKG graphs, echocardiograms, X-ray images, dental records and dental X-rays. Its unique barcode system ensures that the records for one medical facility exactly match the records and definitions for any other facility. The iPHER comes in many storage sizes up to more than 4 gigabytes. Most iPHERs are delivered as "open" devices to allow first responders and healthcare professionals easy access to records in case of emergency or when an individual may be unable to communicate. However, they can be sold with biometric or dual password security.

Patient Practitioners,
www.patientpractitioners.com/ipher.html

MyMedicalRecords PHR

MMRGlobal Inc. provides secure, easy-to-use multilingual personal health records (PHRs) and electronic safe deposit box storage solutions. The MyMedicalRecords PHR enables individuals and families to safely maintain their medical records and other important documents in one central location and instantly access them any time from anywhere in the world using the Internet. Documents, images and voicemail messages can be transmitted and stored using a variety of methods. In the event of an emergency or disaster, medical personnel and first responders can retrieve potentially lifesaving information accessible via a separate emergency login.

MMRGlobal Inc.,
www.mymedicalrecords.com/login.jsp

Medical Data Alert Talking Watch

The Medical Data Alert Talking Watch comes with a built-in USB to store medical data. With the medical alert symbol and the "medical data on USB, press play for message" on the watchband, emergency personnel will be alerted to play and listen to a patient's own 12-second message, as well as to check the USB device for other important information. The USB can store a photo, documents such as a DNR, living will, medical tests, as well as information about medical condition(s), medication(s), physician(s) and more. The watch also features optional hourly announcements and an alarm. It is approximately 9.5 inches long with a rubberized band and a stainless-steel back.

www.amazon.com/Medical-Alert-Talking-Built-In-Optional/dp/B00GDBCEQS

My Cloud

My Cloud allows patients to store, organize and back up photos, videos, music and important documents all in one place. Personal cloud access with the My Cloud app requires a My Cloud, My Book Live, My Book Live Duo or My Net N900 Central with the most recent firmware. Access to cloud services requires the My Cloud app and an active Dropbox, Google Drive or SkyDrive account. My Cloud works on an iOS iPhone or iPad running versions 5.0 or later software, or an Android smartphone or tablet running versions 2.3 or later software.

Western Digital,
www.wdc.com/en/products/products.aspx?id=1140