Pharmacy Automation and Technology

Could You Use a Multidisciplinary Care Team App?

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Information technology generally serves 1 of 2 purposes: to replace tedious tasks or to extend the capabilities of the user. In health care, we are fortunate to have numerous opportunities to extend our capabilities. In this article, we explore how mobile and Web-based technologies can address the growing need to collaborate with all those concerned in care provision.

In several recent *Pharmacy Automation and Technology* columns, we have mentioned our desire to see the development of a multidisciplinary care team app. The goal of this proposed app would be to facilitate communication and collaboration among the people, systems, and any data/information that share responsibility for or are used in support of a patient's care. In our vision, the patient is the unifying factor and the app is the tool that enables more informed and timely care. We have been asking people to stop and consider how information appliances allow us to communicate information in any format, on any device, to any person, anywhere, in real time (or near real time). When we think of people, we include not only health care professionals, such as pharmacists, physicians, nurses, and other multidisciplinary care team providers, but also patients and caregivers, such as family members, loved ones, and even a caring neighbor. It is especially important to engage patients and nonprofessional caregivers, because patients spend much more of their lives outside of the hospital than in the hospital.

An increased focus on care transitions that include the “handoff” of patients from one level of care to another and a narrow focus on minimizing hospital readmissions have added new energy to the need for increased communication and collaboration involving all stakeholders. Other trends include the need for a patient-centric approach that involves patients in their own health care (to the extent that they desire to be engaged), including their active participation in decision-making about their care. We believe that ignoring the drive for participatory health care will ultimately make even the most innovative health care system fail in regard to achieving maximum desirable

outcomes in their patient care efforts. Real accountability includes heightened patient involvement, especially as we see Meaningful Use criteria include such initiatives as tailored patient education programs. Additionally, value-based reimbursement systems are measuring how well quality care has been implemented. The list of drivers that are pushing the reformed health care system of the future is extensive.

With a declining emphasis on fee-for-service payments, we have the opportunity to begin engaging in continuous and coordinated care that can have a realistic “womb to tomb” focus on patients through accountable care organizations (ACOs) and other models of care. Although it is not a new movement, we also see a renewed effort to transition from the most expensive acute care settings to ambulatory delivery of care, which is generally less costly. Alternatively, a new emphasis for mode of care is the ability to connect to the patient's home and actually focus on health, wellness, and preventive care. The organization that responds to all of these synergistic trends must use a team-based and service line approach across the continuum of care to be efficient and effective in its efforts.

So, where does the technology that serves these trends come into play? Let's start with the movement, storage, and security of information, ranging from simple text messages to documents and images and other forms of multimedia content. *Google Drive* has the slogan, “Keep everything. Share anything.” This application offers security for the multidisciplinary care team, especially when a shared account is housed on portable information appliances that are personal to the care team. *Google Drive* can house over 30 file types including HD video and images. A simple

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checkbox can be used to share information with members of a multidisciplinary care team through a variety of different apps. *Google Drive* supports discussions within the care team regarding treatment and monitoring strategies. Any action required by the team that is documented in the electronic medical record (EMR) can be tracked by mobile apps to identify any changes made by the team, including collaboration decisions and care-focused conversations.

Apps that complement *Google Drive* include *Hojoki*, which ties together other cloud apps for note taking and messaging. *Realtime Board* offers a white board for brainstorming and the creation of mind maps. *Marqueed* allows discussion and photo editing to give team members the ability to make changes to and draw on existing digital images. *HelloSign* and *DocuSign* capture online signatures for digital signing of documents and capturing patient consent. The *Smartsheet Project Management* is a collaboration tool that can track the achievement of milestones in medical action plans while sharing the status of these actions across the care team. *Pro Translate* helps with lower English proficiency issues in a diverse patient population. *Drive Templates* supports standardized ordering and care management strategies. *Form+* manages documents throughout the care process. *Smartsheet Office Collaboration* and *ERPAG* can help with the financial aspects of the operation including billing issues and marketing efforts. *FedEx*

Office allows printing on demand for mobile devices. All of these apps use the *Google Drive* as a common database.

The good news is that communication and collaboration are so important across all industries that repurposing existing apps into health care uses can be accomplished without a huge amount of development work. For example, Apple products offer an app called *iClickCare* that allows the sharing of medical information in a secure platform. This app was developed specifically for health care. It doesn't take a great deal of searching to find other useful resources that can address bottlenecks in your provision of care or tools that decrease the uncertainty in decision-making within the team. The *iClickCare* tool is a health care collaboration tool designed for direct patient care use. Its design helps ensure appropriate security, privacy, and confidentiality for protected health information. Any health care app will usually be Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant. Apps that are not primarily intended for health care uses should be carefully scrutinized to determine their policies and practices to safeguard patients' information.

We are always willing to respond to your questions and to hear your comments regarding this and our other columns. You can reach Bill at felkebg@auburn.edu and Brent at foxbren@auburn.edu. You can also post in our blog at www.pharmacy-informatics.com. ■

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