**Winning the Healthcare Revolution: Empowering People with Technology Solutions for Care Coordination, Collaboration & Communication**

We are in the middle of a healthcare revolution. Health systems continue to integrate and expand, acquiring private practices and hospitals. Insurance carriers are still navigating the Affordable Care Act, and merging to build actuarial risk pools. Providers are dealing with changing payment models, transitioning from traditional fee-for-service to merit-based incentive payments (MIPS), though the exact definition of pay-for-performance is not yet codified. And in the midst of these radical changes, doctors, hospitals, and health systems are implementing an array of electronic medical records to finally replace paper records. Two things are clear with all of this upheaval in the medical world – providers are frustrated, and the patient is nowhere to be found.

Doctors, nurses, and healthcare administrators are all under financial and workload pressures; they are trying to comply with healthcare IT requirements for meaningful use, and everyone is uncertain about the future. Patients are exasperated with figuring out insurance plans and in-network versus out-of-network provider coverage; obtaining medical records from their doctors is a challenge; and they are left to their own devices to navigate the complexities of the healthcare system.

Technology is the answer for healthcare transformation, but the entire healthcare ecosystem is a decade behind the information technology boom that has transformed every other industry. Why has it been difficult to bring technology to healthcare? Based on a two-year process of interviewing dozens of stakeholders across the healthcare continuum, we can point to several reasons:

1. HIPAA;
2. Reimbursement – Only this year and last has CMS provided CPT codes for care coordination: Chronic Care Management 99490 and Transitional Care Management 99495 and 99496; shared savings models provide inconsistent results, and are still largely undefined;
3. Limited investment - Providers have already invested heavily in EMRs, spending money and time on workflow management, and are therefore reluctant to add new workflows & software unless integrated with their current EMR systems, which are not built for patient centric care coordination;
4. Technology proficiency - Medical personnel – especially physicians - are not broadly trained in technology and software other than the specific EMR in the practice or hospital, and that training is lagging; Patients – especially senior citizens – have widely varying, and often negligible technology access and knowledge.
5. Data overload –There is so much (un-integrated) data from internal EMR and billing systems, claims forms, labs, and metabolic measures from myriad devices that no person can comprehend. Doctors and patients need clinically meaningful reports, not just data.
6. Transformation – The medical system has been trained and operated as a treatment-focused, fee-for-service business; that is how healthcare professionals earn their living. Population health management and the primary care medical home models of healthcare require a realignment of the provider-patient relationship, transformation of business focus from in-office visits to out-of-the-office management, new staff and resource allocation – all without a defined financial model for future practice.

So, how, in the current tumultuous environment, can we ever achieve the triple aim of better health and improved care delivery at lower costs? The answer is patient-centric collaboration – working together to achieve a common outcome. But in order to make collaborative care work, we need patients, nurses, and doctors to embrace technology for collaboration. To this end, a new role in healthcare - the Care Coordinator - is the lynchpin to connecting patients to the healthcare system. Plus, an array of new and emerging software platforms like GetRealHealth1 and C3HealthLink2 for population health management can foster the personal communication necessary to engage patients outside the office environment, with the system-driven performance to drive efficiency.

Fortunately, the Care Coordinator position is currently being championed in several areas. For example, here in New Jersey, Horizon BCBS has promoted care coordination for many years by funding practices for on-site care coordinators. The primary care medical home (PCMH) movement embraces the care coordinator role and collaborative care, and The Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC3), a not-for-profit trade group, is dedicated to healthcare transformation through primary care.

Plus there is hope on the patient technology front. According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of Americans own a smartphone, and for those seniors who do own smartphones, 82% describe the phone as “freeing”2. Plus, broadband access is expanding through initiatives like the recently announced ConnectHome Pilot Program3 that will bring Internet access to underserved areas.

Through technology, we can optimize care delivery if we can provide care coordinators and patients with the tools they need to engage in health, and systems that provide interconnected data exchange through the patient’s health record, enabling:

* Patients to engage in health practices that promote adherence to medication schedules, self monitoring, and care planning, together with HIPAA-compliant communications tools that foster responsibility and collaboration with a care team;
* Medical practices to manage patient populations inside and outside of the healthcare system to optimize care coordination (treatment, transition, communication, monitoring), while establishing workflows for the impending reimbursement changes to pay for performance;
* Health systems to establish new care coordination and data sharing models using cloud-based, HIPAA-compliant data exchange and communications channels that integrate clinically relevant data;
* Payors to evaluate and measure patient engagement in health and provider practices for care coordination and collaborative care in order to reimburse providers for performance.

The challenges in healthcare are many, but we can emerge from this healthcare revolution with a stronger healthcare system through collaboration, with patients taking responsibility, providers communicating and sharing data, health systems funding new delivery models, and payors enabling a sustainable financial model that provides benefits to all stakeholders.

1 GetRealHealth (<http://www.getrealhealth.com/instantphr-platform/>)

2C3HealthLink by intelliSanté (http://intellisante.com)

3The Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative (<https://www.pcpcc.org>)

4 Smith, A., U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015. Pew Research Center. April 15, 2015 (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>)

5 ConnectHome Pilot Program (<http://connecthome.hud.gov>)

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