

The Rise Of Patient-Relationship Technologies:

Three Health Care Trends That Are Going To Change The Way You Use Technology In Your Practice

by Henri Nuber



This is a strange time to be involved in health care. Doctors have their own mobile apps. Patients are tweeting personal health information, and broadcasting their arrival to their clinic of choice on Facebook. Google has shut down their online health care records service, but multiple start-up companies are launching their own health care concierge services. Without a doubt, mobile and web-centered applications are already changing how doctors and patients relate and do business. And this change would happen even without a mandate for providers to adopt electronic health records.

As Americans adapt to doctor-patient relationships that included many touches of technology, chiropractors have to wonder: where do I fit in? Chiropractors are already known for partnering with their patients by encouraging wellness concepts and even shifting patient behavior. In what ways will your practice look different ten years from now? And in what ways will technology play a role?

Here are the three possible trends that are going to affect the environment in which you practice.

1. Chronic disease management will make the hospital less important

If you went back in time, and told your great-grandfather that newspapers were going to go bankrupt, he probably would not believe you. Likewise, if someone claiming to be from the future arrived, telling you that hospitals were closing down and were not the centers of health care in America, you would probably not believe that person either. Yet we live in a day and age when newspapers are closing down left and right.

In the United States, the rise of both the aging population and the number of younger Americans with chronic disease is going to change how health care is delivered. The focus on specialty medicine, infectious disease, and emergency care is going to come second to helping patients stay healthy despite their lifestyle induced illnesses. Why? Because 75% of all health care dollars are going toward chronic dis-

ease management. As any good chiropractor knows, how families live impacts health care costs more than what viruses they are exposed to.

Yes, there will be an emphasis on people making better lifestyle choices, but containing costs through better coordination will be a huge focus.

Keeping people out of the hospital for as long as possible will be the order of the day; the ER will not be the catch-all place to go to when you cannot get a hold of a doctor. People will be less likely to call a specialist directly because they will stop taking calls. Sending a text to a community nurse on standby, or leaving a message for your medical home manager to coordinate an appointment is going to be the first step.

Listen to what the head of New York State's Department of Public

Health, Nirav Shah, MD, PhD, says as quoted online on TechCrunch.com: "The old system, acute care focused in the hospital...that was the past. Tomorrow is chronic disease focused in an outpatient setting. That is what the Health Home program promises and that is what the Medicaid program is investing in."

Much of the coming changes are going to require doctors use of technology to engage patients in everyday practice. And it's not just going to be centered on electronic health records. This trend is going to lead to two other trends that will change the scene.



2. Insurance reimbursement will happen for online health care

It appears that the future will require more doctor-patient coordination of care, while there are fewer doctors and more patients to go around. A big hurdle to getting doctors to adopt this model is an insurance scheme where patients need to be present for most primary care visits. Doctors are not going to put the work in if that work is not covered in a reimbursement scheme.

In order for health care to be coordinated online and over the phone, it is going to have to be reimbursable. Otherwise all coordination will be focused on coordinating patient visits with higher service codes in order to justify all the time spent in coordination away from the office. And that will not lead to a more nimble, cost-effective system.

Much in the way distance learning is changing how students pay for their education, chronic disease management is going to change the way third-party payers pay providers for the services they give to patients.



3. EHRs will be nothing without patient-relationship management technology

Electronic health records will only be the first step in the technology that private practice providers have to adopt. With the emphasis on patient management, patient portals that patients will use, understand, and like, are going to be just as important. Patient portals are any elec-

tronic tool that allows patients to communicate private health information securely with their providers, including the transfer of electronic health records.

Electronic health records help doctors talk to each other more effi-

ciently and openly, but other tools are necessary to include patients. What is the point of having health records electronic and available if patients cannot, will not, or do not

want to use the tools you have to download their records? What is the point of trying to coordinate lifestyle changes for patients who find using the technology a burden? Will patients have to change the portal they use to communicate with you every time you change your health record vendor?

If 75% of the health care economy really comes down to the decisions patients make when they are outside a provider's office, then electronic health records are not the total answer. Venture capitalists are investing heavily in the health care technology that allows doctors and patients to communicate securely and efficiently, while enabling patients to manage their own health care with the help of both doctors and insurance companies.



What do these trends mean for chiropractors?

It is difficult to predict what these changes will mean for chiropractors. Here are a few possibilities:

- As the country's first true wellness providers, chiropractors will be early adopters in patient-relationship management technology. Technology that allows patients to

schedule visits, chart use of home-exercise, and get nutritional advice on meals and supplements in addition to planning their routine chiropractic care.

- Chiropractors will use these technologies to add and automate wellness coaching as a cash-based,

value-added service.

• Chiropractors will use these technologies to add and automate nutritional testing and counseling as a reimbursed service.

• As providers that require less clinical overhead, more chiropractors will adopt a have-table-will-travel practice model that takes them to the patient, instead of the patients coming to them. As patients become

more comfortable with mobile apps and online coordination tools, this will become even easier. Fifteen years ago newspapers were thriving. Today they are dying. For decades hospitals have been the center of what it means to be important in health care. Now some experts

Patient-relationship technology is going to be the catalyst for much of this change, perhaps becoming even more important than electronic health records.

• Chiropractors will become natural health care primary care providers in the shortage of primary care physicians, and a new emphasis on lifestyle management.

• Chiropractors will offer virtual consultations and second opinions to patients who find it difficult to leave their homes.

• Chiropractors will offer virtual consultations and second opinions to patients who want the convenience of the service.

more comfortable with mobile apps and online coordination tools, this will become even easier.

• Chiropractors will digitally cooperate with the patient's primary care providers and medical home coordinators, joining the patient's virtual health care team.

Or alternatively, as virtual coordination becomes so emphasized, patients will appreciate chiropractors for being the last port of entry providers that you can visit without going through a bunch of coordina-

tion if you don't want to. As Americans begin to adapt to and even embrace doctor-patient relationships that include many touches of technology, how will your practice fit in?

About the Author — Henri Nuber is the publisher of DC Products Review.

invertrac®
LOWER BACK PAIN RELIEF



QUANTITY PRICES
 1 \$285.00 ea.
 2 \$275.00 ea.
 3+ \$259.00 ea.
In U.S. Dollars

SUGGESTED PATIENT PRICE
\$385.00
 30 Day conditional money back guarantee

Prices subject to change without notice
LASHAW DISTRIBUTORS LTD.
 9631 Bakerview Dr.
 Richmond, B.C. Canada V7A 2A2

Tel:(604) 270-4263
 Fax:(604) 277-2154
 Toll Free1-800-667-7795

Websitewww.invertrac.com
 E-mail:invertrac@invertrac.com



 C.O.D.
 or prepay
 by cheque

GET THE Latest chiropractic news today



- it's 100% chiropractic
- get up to date on the latest products
- relevant articles from today's professionals
- special sections on specific products every month
- find out about contests when they start
- access to FREE product information directly from the companies you read about

computer software
 what's right for you!

www.dcproductsreview.org

CIRCLE 10 ON REPLY CARD

CIRCLE 11 ON REPLY CARD