



Health Matters

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Set the Record Straight

New Personal Health Records Aim to Improve Health Care

We all know American employers do most of the heavy lifting when it comes to providing health insurance for their workers. The good news is the balance is beginning to shift. Employees have more tools than ever to help them care for themselves.

The personal health record is an exciting new electronic health-care tool that will revolutionize the way your employees manage their health. It is part of a growing trend by employers across the country to offer Web-based resources and health promotion programs on-site to help their work force lose weight, quit tobacco or increase physical activity. This confidential personal health record is one of the most powerful methods available today for individuals to take charge of their own health in one convenient online location.

Research suggests that less than half of adults in the United States keep any medical records at all. That's why, for most of us, looking for a piece of personal health information can turn into a serious paper chase. Haphazard record-keeping is not just inefficient; it can actually affect the quality of your health care.

Personal health records enable your employees to conveniently keep health information organized and current, stay on top of annual screenings such as mammograms and physicals, and work with their physicians to maintain an accurate history. A complete history may even help eliminate repeat medical tests and guard against adverse drug interactions.

In most cases, claims submitted in your employees' name for tests, procedures, office visits, prescriptions, and other covered benefits are automatically and continuously captured, organized and incorporated into his or her record. Your employees can fill in the rest of their health history, entering information at any time, from anywhere, 24/7. They can note family history, new symptoms, over-the-counter medications and other health-related information that may not be captured in the claims database of your local health insurer.

Security and confidentiality are top of mind. That's why the best insurance companies provide security through banking-level encryption and authentication processes. Your employees are the only ones who can retrieve or edit their record, which is often accessed through the insurer's Web site.

With a robust personal health record, your employees can take an active role in their health care by improving communication with their doctor. They can even track their progress toward health-related goals by reviewing the results of a health risk assessment, for example, or a health screening that measures body mass index, blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Assessments and screenings can provide information on possible health risks that may develop in the future.

So talk to your local insurer to see if a personal health record is available in your area. After all, employees who track their past and present are laying the foundation for a healthier future.

A Glance Inside the Personal Health Record

Here are some additional benefits your employees are likely to see each time they open their personal health record:

- Automatically updated records of outpatient and inpatient health-care services
- Continuously recorded results of tests and lab work
- Personal and family health history
- Personalized reminders for managing chronic medical conditions
- Educational resources linked to results of diagnostic testing

Health insurers are committed to responding to consumer demand for greater transparency of information on health care. So take a look at what's available in your area and take an important step toward creating a healthier work force. *

For more information on personal health records, contact Michael Taylor at 412/454-7534 or visit upmchealthplan.com.