

## UPMC plan creates its own PHR

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PITTSBURGH, PA – Since UPMC Health Plan launched its personal health record, or PHR, in July, 26,000 unique users have viewed their information.

Unlike many recent payer-led PHRs, UPMC Health Plan developed its platform in-house after reviews of commercial applications did not meet its vision.

UPMC Health Plan wanted more than just portability and data mining. “We wanted an application that had all that functionality and that we could build onto as desired,” said Sharon Hicks, vice president of Internet strategy.

The payer eschewed hosted applications as well. “The UPMC Health Plan has a strong focus on data analysis to determine illness risk and wellness benefit for our members,” she said. “Toward that end, one of our highest priorities was immediate and unfettered access to certain data elements.”

The PHR has built-in interfaces that permit data sharing between the health plan and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Both health plan and health system are discussing linking the latter’s patient portals to the PHR so members who use the health system can access information relevant to their conditions.

Through its enterprise data warehouse, which serves as the PHR’s foundation, UPMC Health Plan runs health algorithms against a member’s data – including health risk assessment, claims data and self-entered data – and the PHR delivers color-coded recommendations, or Reminders for Better Health.

“Our leadership wanted to make sure that we built a PHR that was directly connected to our mission of improving the health of our members,” said Hicks. “We use clinical staff to help us determine what’s meaningful in our data sets. The design happens within the medical team.”

UPMC Health Plan, which has 500,000 members in its commercial and Medicare business, is continuing to roll out the PHR to other groups as they re-enroll and develop other functionalities, including incentives for its well population.

“The openness of the application will allow us to develop the next generation of PHRs and integrate them with our current standalone programs,” said CIO Ed McCallister.

“UPMC Health Plans’ decision to develop internally speaks to the relative immaturity of the marketplace,” said Lynne Dunbrack, program director for Health Industry Insights, an IDC company. “The market is still evolving and working toward achieving standards for PHRs.”