

Monday, October 13, 2008

EMRs on the iPhone: The Canadian Lesson



Let's take a good look at what can be achieved when a practical approach to technology is applied. I keep hammering on the subject of Electronic Medical Records (EMR) because it is an aspect of George C. Halvorson's strategy that really resonates with me on a personal level.

In the wake of Hurricane Gustav, we saw one major advantage that the ongoing discussion rarely touched on: having backups of paper records destroyed in a natural disaster. Now it is time to take a look at portability and accessibility in the age of the iPod and iPhone.

Via Briony Smith at *ITWorld Canada*:

The paramedics can now use an iPhone to access the patient's history, courtesy of Raven, a program from Calgary health-care integration and collaboration software vendor Coalese that was rolled out earlier this year. Next January will see the region's health-care providers take the application bi-directional, and update information in the patient's file that could benefit the person's primary care. "That way, if the paramedic sees that Granny hasn't been taking her meds or needs to note procedures done in the ambulance, the primary care physician can see that in their record right away," said Coalese president Andrzej Taramina.

To get everyone on the right footing, paramedics and doctors from local clinics and hospitals gathered together to determine what information they needed to access on the go. "Confidentiality was one issue, but, with the iPhone, nothing is stored there. It's the (Web-based) program that accesses the records," she said.

The iPhone is ubiquitous; every day you see more and more people carry them or their near cousin the iPod Touch. Both devices have been gaining ground along with a whole new generation of wireless devices. Using these portable devices to access medical records "on the fly" is a logical extension of EMRs that is not often discussed.

In an increasingly mobile and digitally connected society, this makes perfect sense. Health care pros could access full patient records almost instantly from the scene of an accident. Allergies could be determined before administration of medication. Current treatments added to the record while en route to hospital treatment could allow a doctor to be up to the minute on what has been done to the patient on the way.

As we get more and more people on board for EMRs, we really need to look at the potential for wireless devices. I think the Canadians are dead on the money with this one!

SOURCE: "The iPhones Could Save Your Life" 10/10/08
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A companion blog to George C Halvorson's new book

<http://healthcarereformnow.blogspot.com/2008/10/emrs-on-iphone-canadian-lesson.html>