

Michigan health plan launches e-Visits

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The Internet is changing medical care for thousands of Detroit area residents who soon will be able to get advice from their family doctors by e-mail.

The program, called e-Visits, is being launched by the Henry Ford Health System in an effort to help doctors better manage patients with chronic conditions and clear crowded waiting rooms, the Detroit News says.

Doctors in the plan will receive \$20 for providing an e-mail consultation, provided an in-person follow-up visit isn't necessary.

Patients who e-mail their doctors with questions and concerns will be guaranteed an answer within one business day and won't have to wait at home for a phone call, the News said.

The Henry Ford system includes a secure Web portal to protect patient privacy. Those who take part in the program will be assigned a username and password.

Medical experts have been debating the efficacy of e-mail communication between doctors and patients for nearly a decade now, the report said. Some physicians feel anything other than face-to-face care compromises quality.

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