

Mayo Clinic backs new personal health record site

April 21 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- The Mayo Clinic has combined its medical expertise with Microsoft Corp.'s technology in a free Web site launching Tuesday that will let people store personal health and medical information.

The Mayo Clinic Health Manager, as the site is called, is one of many emerging services for so-called personal health records. The sites, from companies such as Microsoft and Google Inc. and major health insurers, are meant to give people an easy way to stash [medical information](#) and transfer it to a new clinic, hospital or specialist. But those providers aren't necessarily ready for such an electronic revolution, which for now means it takes some work on the patient's part to set up and maintain the records.

The Mayo Clinic Health Manager uses Microsoft's HealthVault system to store medical histories, test results, immunization files and other records from doctors' offices and hospital visits, along with data from home devices like heart rate monitors.

Anyone can sign up for an account, not just Mayo Clinic patients. Users can give access to different slices of their health information to doctors and family members as the need arises.

The site prompts people to get started by answering questions about their family medical history and current and past health problems, allergies and medications. Based on that information plus age, gender and other factors, the site recommends additional tasks - scheduling a

mammogram, for instance - and articles for further reading.

People can add contact details for doctors, pharmacies and insurance companies and set reminders for upcoming appointments.

Dr. Sidna Tulledge-Scheitel, an internist and medical director of global products and services at Mayo Clinic, hopes the site will help people better manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure at home. Tulledge-Scheitel said that without a system like Health Manager, she has to hope a refrigerator magnet suffices to remind asthma patients to regularly perform some self-diagnostic exams. The site would remind them to do it monthly. (The system doesn't send e-mail reminders for privacy reasons, so the patient has to be in the habit of logging on to the site frequently.)

Advocates of electronic medical records say the technology is more cost-effective than paper files and reduces medical errors. But the rollout has been slow, which is why the federal stimulus package this year included incentives for doctors and hospitals to adopt electronic health records.

In the health care system of the future, sites like Mayo Clinic's might connect seamlessly with pharmacies, hospitals and doctors' offices to update records. Today, however, while Microsoft's HealthVault system can connect to some pharmacies, insurance companies and providers, most doctors have yet to invest in an electronic system. For patients, that means typing the results of surgeries, lab tests and other information into the Health Manager themselves.

Privacy advocates urge people who want to set up a personal health record online to read the fine print. Deven McGraw, director of the health privacy project at the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology, said sites like the [Mayo Clinic](#) Health Manager aren't currently covered by national laws that specify cases in which health care

systems can access and share information without patients' consent.

On the Net:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com>

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