

Health care groups collaborate on new reference guides for personal health records

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Several groups across the healthcare sector will rollout two new "Personal Health Record (PHR) Quick Reference Guides" in an effort to educate consumers and clinicians about how PHRs can be useful tools for making more informed healthcare decisions and enhancing care coordination.

The easy-to-use guides, one for consumers and one for clinicians, include basic information about PHRs along with a FAQ section designed to increase understanding of the value of using and maintaining a PHR. The guides were created by a collaboration of healthcare groups including the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA), the American College of Physicians (ACP), the American Osteopathic Association of [Medical Informatics](#) (AOAMI), and the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA).

PHRs are vital healthcare tools that allow consumers to store [health information](#) such as medical conditions, allergies, medications, and doctor or hospital visits in one convenient and secure place. The consumer controls how the information in the PHR is shared, and with whom.

"Empowering consumers and clinicians with readily available health information helps get the right information into the right hands at the right time. Health plans are playing a valuable role in providing consumers with the tools and information necessary to make well-informed healthcare decisions," said Dr. Allan Korn, BCBSA senior vice

president and chief medical officer. "PHRs can be an important contribution to helping personalize a patient's healthcare experience."

According to a recent survey of Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies, 90 percent of respondents currently offer or are planning to offer PHRs to their members, which is a significant increase over the 56 percent of Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies who offered or planned to offer PHRs in 2008.

PHRs also enable individual patients and their designated caregivers to view and manage health information and play a greater role in their own healthcare choices. "Patients have the ability to quickly and readily share healthcare information via a PHR, allowing providers to help determine a treatment plan and keep track of chronic diseases such as diabetes," said Joseph W. Stubbs, MD, FACP, president, ACP.

"Encouraging physicians, other providers and patients to utilize PHRs will help streamline care coordination and improve the delivery of care," said Daniel W. Saylak, DO, president of the AOAMI. "PHRs have the ability to encourage individuals to make healthier lifestyle decisions."

While PHR usage continues to grow, these new quick reference guides were designed to help improve consumers' familiarity and comfort level with PHR tools to encourage more participation. "Increased utilization of health information tools such as PHRs is one avenue to help improve healthcare quality and efficiency," said William F. Jessee, MD, FACMPE, president and CEO of MGMA.

More information: For more information about PHRs or to download copies of the PHR Quick Reference Guides for consumers or providers, please visit www.bcbs.com/phr_guide

Provided by American College of Physicians

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