

Predictive health shows promise for changing U.S. health care delivery

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Results of a study reported today show promise for changing the way U.S. health care may one day be delivered. This new way of delivering health care would focus on predicting health as opposed to waiting for disease to begin.

The researchers say that by assessing fundamental physiological and psychological processes to predict potential health risks--and by providing a health partner to help people develop and implement their own health goals—there is a greater chance of staying healthy throughout life.

An article describing the study, conducted by researchers at the Emory/Georgia Tech Predictive Health Institute, appears online at and in the October 2010 issue of the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Study researchers are also aiming to define health as effectively as modern science permits, and to learn what physical, psychological and emotional factors describe and predict health. With this knowledge, interventions could be designed that are affordable and effective instead of waiting for disease and illness to set in.

“One premise of predictive health is that it should be less expensive, more efficient and thus yield a greater return on the investment of keeping people healthy as opposed to waiting for illness and disease,” says Kenneth Bringham, MD, associate vice president and director of Emory University’s Predictive Health Initiative.

For just that reason, the term ‘predictive health,’ has been chosen to emphasize prediction instead of diagnosis, and health instead of disease, says Bringham, author of the paper. Thus, the aim of predictive health is to define, predict and maintain health--throughout the entire lifespan.

Researchers are finding one way to accomplish this goal is through health assessments and matching participants with health partners. The current study collected detailed data from participants on their family situation, anxiety level, depression, diet and exercise habits as well as physical measurements such as blood pressure, heart rate, body fat, bone density and various biomarkers. The data were then assembled into a health assessment report, a summary and interpretation of the information.

At this point, health partners provided more information and support for each participant to develop a health action plan aimed at meeting specific goals to help participants develop and maintain their optimum health.

Study results show statistically significant reductions in cholesterol levels, blood pressure, blood glucose, body fat, depression, anxiety and

stress.

“We have found that in just six months time, many of our participants have experienced significant improvements in metabolic, cardiovascular, immune and emotional health,” says Brigham. Longer-term follow-up studies are planned.

More information: Reported in a special issue called State-of-the-Art in Longitudinal Studies on Aging, “Predictive Health: The Imminent Revolution in Health Care” is [available in PDF format](#).

Provided by Emory University

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