

Making health information technology more patient-centered

January 18 2011

Personal health records have great potential to help patients manage their health, but technology needs to be designed with the patient in mind – which means doing more than helping patients access health information, according to an editorial by two Virginia Commonwealth University family medicine physicians published in the Jan.19 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

In the editorial, Alexander Krist, M.D., M.P.H., associate professor in the Department of [Family Medicine](#) in the VCU School of Medicine, together with Steven Woolf, M.D., M.P.H., professor in the Department of Family Medicine and director of the VCU Center for Human Needs, describe a model to guide the creation of more patient-centered [personal health records](#).

The model describes how personal [health records](#) should include five key functions: to collect and store information from [patients](#); to collect and store information from the patient's doctor; to translate clinical information into lay language; to tell patients how to improve their health based on their personal information; and to make the information actionable for patients.

Using principles from their model, Krist and Woolf's research team has created a patient-centered personal health record for prevention called "MyPreventiveCare," which shows patients their medical information and tells them what it means in a way they can understand. Further, it guides them to the next action steps.

"Currently, most personal health records do little more than store and show patients' information," Krist said. "We are not taking full advantage of technology.

"A patient-centered personal health record should make information actionable. It should allow patients to access and coordinate care, provide personally tailored decision aids and educational materials, prioritize individual needs and integrate care across primary and specialty care," said Krist

MyPreventiveCare and the model to make personal health records more patient-centered are the foundation for the work of three active grants being led by Krist and Woolf. Their current investigation aims to determine if "MyPreventiveCare" can improve patients' use of preventive care services.

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

Citation: Making health information technology more patient-centered (2011, January 18) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-01-health-technology-patient-centered.html>

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