

Researchers develop tool that saves time, eliminates mistakes in diabetes care

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In the fast-paced world of health care, doctors are often pressed for time during patient visits. Researchers at the University of Missouri developed a tool that allows doctors to view electronic information about patients' health conditions related to diabetes on a single computer screen. A new study shows that this tool, the diabetes dashboard, saves time, improves accuracy and enhances patient care.

The diabetes [dashboard](#) provides information about patients' vital signs, health conditions, current medications, and [laboratory tests](#) that may need to be performed. The study showed that physicians who used the dashboard were able to correctly identify data they were searching for 100 percent of the time, compared with 94 percent using traditional [electronic medical records](#). Further, the number of mouse clicks needed to find the information was reduced from 60 to three when using the diabetes dashboard.

Richelle Koopman, associate professor of family and community medicine in the School of Medicine, says [diabetes care](#) is complex because there are so many other [health conditions](#) associated with the disease; thus coordination of treatments is required. The goal of the diabetes dashboard is to make it easier for doctors to make the right decision about treatments.

"The diabetes dashboard is so intuitive that it makes it hard for physicians not to do the right thing," Koopman said. "Doctors can see, at a glance, everything that might affect their decision. This frees up their minds and helps them make better decisions about patients' care."

According to Koopman, the research has important implications for patient safety and costs. For example, the dashboard shows doctors a list of tests that are standard for [diabetes patients](#) and indicates whether patients have recently had the tests or need to have them. This eliminates the

potential for physicians to order costly tests that are not necessary.

"It is difficult to quantify how much money the dashboard saves, but in terms of time and accuracy, the savings are substantial," Koopman said. "Doctors are still going to spend 15 minutes with each patient, but instead of using a large portion of that time to search through charts for information, they can have interactive conversations with patients about lifestyle and diet changes that are important for diabetes care."

The researchers say the dashboard was well received by doctors who tested it because it was designed by physicians familiar with their needs. The study, published in *Annals of Family Medicine*, was a collaboration among the MU School of Medicine, The Informatics Institute, the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies in the College of Education, the Center for Health Care Quality and the Sinclair School of Nursing.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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