

Accelerating e-Prescribing

Strategies, suggestions and solutions to improve patient safety, reduce medication errors and enhance medical care through electronic prescribing

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WSJ: Can Technology Really Change Healthcare?



In an article recently published in the Wall Street Journal entitled, “Prescription for Change,” Professor Amar Gupta of the University of Arizona makes the case that health care has historically managed to avoid the information technology revolution. However, he believes that it won’t be able to dodge the technology wave for much longer.

The entire health-care industry – from physicians and pharmacies to large hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers – are about to undergo a revolution driven by information technology. “While hospitals and other care providers have long been quick to adopt breakthrough technology in medical devices, procedures and treatments, far less attention has focused on innovations in networking and communications,” Professor Gupta contends.

Concerns such as breaches in security and patient privacy are often cited as barriers to the widespread adoption of health information technology (HIT). However, security will “eventually meet the expectations of the health-care industry, just as has happened in other sectors, like banking.”

And when it does, according to Professor Gupta, powerful IT networks crisscrossing the globe will change the way much of health care is delivered: “Outsourcing and offshoring of medical and non-medical services will increase, providing more efficient health care at the most cost-effective rates; systems integrations will allow more medical records to be transferred swiftly and securely; efforts to monitor the safety of medicines will gain global access to data; and professionals and patients will find authoritative and up-to-date information on every specialty online.”

The WSJ article indicates that in the future, there will be three overlapping modes of delivering healthcare services: 1) services performed in person by humans, 2) services that can be performed by people at a remote location, and 3) services performed by computers without direct human involvement. Offshore outsourcing in combination with a 24-hour work cycle will be appropriate when certain conditions are met – mainly, if the information involved in the task can be digitized, and if workers at different sites can do their jobs independently from one another.

There will be plenty of challenges, barriers and obstacles as healthcare institutions and networks reach across borders and encounter different laws as well as technical standards. In the meantime, healthcare organizations that don’t join in the coming changes will incur higher costs and less integration. The WSJ believes this will make them less competitive in the global healthcare marketplace.

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