

Chronic Disease Management: Benefits to Patients, Providers



Providing support to patients in managing their chronic conditions not only leads to improved care outcomes, but also enables hospitals to save money in the form of avoided readmission penalties. These are among the key findings of a new study by communications firm West.

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Preventable hospital readmissions are estimated to account for more than \$17 billion in Medicare expenditures each year, and some of those Medicare costs are passed on to hospitals in the form of penalties – projected to cost about \$528 million during the 2017 fiscal year. Under the Hospital Readmission Reduction Programme, about half of all U.S. hospitals were hit with payment penalties last year.

Notably, there's a knowledge gap among patients when it comes to managing their chronic diseases. In a survey conducted by West, only about 39 percent of respondents admitted they were only somewhat knowledgeable, at best, about how to effectively manage their condition. For example, a patient who has never had diabetes is not likely to know how to take a blood glucose reading, or what that reading even means. They may not know how to follow a healthy diet, or what symptoms might signal the need for immediate medical attention.

For hospitals, a key strategy to help patients is extending chronic disease management to the home. At least 70 percent of patients with a chronic condition said they'd like more resources or clarity on how to manage their disease, and 91 percent said they need help doing so. The support that patients are now getting from providers occurs mostly in a physician's office – which are important, but may not be meeting patients' needs fully.

The study suggests that tailoring communications is an effective strategy for helping patients manage their chronic ailments. Providers can tailor chronic care information by using information from health records. They can also personalise all of their communication and reminders, and use email, voice and text messaging to connect with patients through their preferred form of communication, and at their preferred times.

Another option for providers is the use of biometric monitoring devices. Heart rate monitors, blood pressure cuffs, pulse oximeters, blood glucose meters and other devices can be used to collect health readings remotely.

Those strategies can improve outcomes, according to the study. And when patient outcomes improve, preventable hospital readmissions decrease, patients have better overall experiences, and hospitals can earn more reimbursements and avoid penalties.

Source: [Healthcare Finance](#)

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