

Five ways health IT will reduce the cost of care

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Health IT presents many opportunities to dramatically improve healthcare delivery in America, from changing the way healthcare is financed to enhancing efficiency. Jerry Buchanan, account director, healthcare technology and services at eMids Technologies, shares five ways that health IT can cut healthcare costs in the long term.

1. Improved standards of care

Analyzing data collected by electronic health records provides the best treatment methods, leading to a healthier population. "Whether this data is combined with financial data to analyze cost effectiveness or not... is tangential to the overall goal of knowing the best way to handle treatment for each individual patient," Buchanan noted.

2. Increased patient involvement and collaboration

America's health expenditure is in a large part due to chronic health issues. Chronic diseases brought on by poor lifestyle choices are difficult to handle, but health IT "provides a clear avenue for enterprising organizations to develop innovative disease management solutions to address the issue," according to Buchanan. Data retrieved from EHRs could also be useful in determining ways to stem costs associated with chronic illness.

3. Putting information at the forefront

The healthcare industry is constantly changing, and that results in an overwhelming amount of information to distill and absorb. Health IT offers a way to bring that information to the forefront.

4. Focus on outcomes

"The coming tidal wave of electronic clinical data provides an opportunity to replace our outdated, volume-based, fee-for-service business model with one focused on the quality of the product," Buchanan said.

5. Transparency to the patient

Health IT should be used as a tool to include the patient in his or her own care. "Our current system of financing healthcare leaves patients completely insulated from the cost of their care,"

said Buchanan. "Until we find a means for patients to educate themselves and question services, quality and price, the market forces that can naturally contain rising healthcare costs will never have an opportunity to work."

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