



Western Physicians' Alliance



NEWSLETTER

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REGISTRIES AND DATA SOURCES

A prerequisite for any Population Health Management, (PHM) data strategy is the implementation of electronic health records (EHRs). But, even though a majority of physicians now have some kind of EHR, many do not. So the communications piece of PHM must include the capability to push clinical data to providers who don't have EHRs. EHRs enable providers to store and retrieve data, but they lack many of the tools required for implementing and automating PHM.

Moreover, while many EHRs contain patient portals, they are not designed to connect individual care alerts with patient outreach. Consequently, organizations that seek to do PHM must supplement their EHRs with third-party applications of various kinds. The most important kind of enhancement is an electronic, population-wide patient registry. Such a registry lists all patients' health problems, the healthcare services that have been provided to them, the dates when they were provided, their lab results, and other information. Among other things, registries and associated analytic software can be used to:

- Stratify populations by health risk
- Identify care gaps
- Alert providers and care managers about unmet patient health needs

- Create patient lists for outreach to patients who need services
- Improve communication among care team members

The data required to compile a comprehensive registry extends beyond the information contained in a single organization's EHR. Ideally, the registry should also encompass data on services that have been rendered to patients outside of the organization and, sometimes, outside of the geographical area in which patients usually receive healthcare.

Conclusion:

As the healthcare industry moves toward value-based reimbursement and various forms of financial risk, it is evident that PHM will be an invaluable strategy. The time to prepare for PHM is now, and the analytic and automation tools needed to build the necessary infrastructure are available. The biggest challenge facing providers who go down this road will be changing their culture and their orientation from the model of treating one patient at a time to managing the health of their population.

Only by ensuring that every person in a population receives care team attention and assistance in self-management can an organization hope to improve quality and reduce costs to the extent required. Contact WPA for more information at 775-827-5775.

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