Abstract

The efforts of this research are to educate patients within vulnerable populations in the use of electronic personal health records so they may better monitor their health, attain desired health goals and manage their health services. Evaluation measures will include facets of self-management of health, patient-physician communication, and assessment of accessibility and usability factors of the personal health record.

Introduction

This poster will outline preliminary research of a full study evaluating the extent to which a personal health record (PHR) system can play a pivotal role in fostering a sense of patient-centeredness and health awareness within vulnerable populations.

Frequent utilization of high intensity emergency and inpatient services by this population is well documented. These patients often experience multiple hospitalizations and emergency visits for preventable conditions that are the result of sporadic and fragmented treatment of chronic conditions. For instance, approximately 6% of the inpatients at the LAC+USC medical center in 2003 represented a bed utilization of 16% of all bed-days in that year.

The program this study evaluates is called the Camino de Salud Network (CDSN). CDSN (Figure 1) is a patient care delivery model that seeks to provide targeted services to uninsured patients with chronic medical conditions. Facets of this program include unique care manager and personal health record applications targeted for uninsured, chronically ill patients.

Gaps in Understanding

Successful adoption will hinge on the ability of PHR systems to allow patients to directly manage their illness and to make the system transparent enough to invoke a notion of trust. PHRs will not be extensively adopted until they can prove to patients that there is some inherent health value associated with them. Within vulnerable populations the challenges to adoption increase significantly. Even supposing that the systems developed provide the technical ability to assist and assuming that notions of trust are successfully garnered, it is likely that the next hurdle will be to overcome some element of access, disability, understanding or literacy.

References