

Insights into EHR and Sub-Specialty Disease Management

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Electronic Health Records Software

Third in a Four-Part Case Study Series

Electronic Health Records: A Well Managed Care Plan for Diabetic Patients

By Mark Moran, DO

Patient History

A 33-year-old male diagnosed as a juvenile diabetic since the age of 15. He has been a patient for 10 years and has received early treatment for diabetic macular edema.

Organizing Complicated Records

Recording of our patient examinations has changed a lot since the days when we scribbled notes that served only as pertinent reminders for the examining physician. Today we maintain complicated medical records and organize the multi-faceted care of our patients in such a way that the computer has become just as important of a tool as the ophthalmoscope.

As the incident of diabetes increases worldwide, diabetic retinopathy has become a more prevalent problem. Visual impairment can be one of the health consequences of diabetes and the best defense against it is a well managed care plan for the patient.

Patient Reminders and Education

Diabetes is a chronic disease and the risk of poor compliance can be great. Education and well planned management of the patient improves cooperation, but a critical part of treatment is prevention and early detection. Patients, such as the one described in this article, may have the best of intentions for their treatment, but still may need multiple reminders for regular exams when they are not experiencing overt symptoms.

The maximEyes EHR system that we use has improved our recalls while freeing up staff to perform more personal and meaningful tasks. A powerful feature in maximEyes is the ability to locate patients with specific criteria in a matter of seconds. With paper charts this was a mundane, repetitive, error prone endeavor. Now our system generates postcard and letter reminders automatically at specific times.

A paper chart still follows the patient through their visit, but it only serves as a "marker" for the patient, as we maintain complete treatment information in the electronic health record.

In addition, once we get a patient in the exam room, the software aids us with their continuing education. Our system is setup to record the type of educational material given out at each visit. This ensures we are giving them the latest information without duplicates.

Monitoring Patients with Diagnostic Testing

This patient is monitored via diagnostic testing such as macular photographs or OCT. The process of retrieving this data is ubiquitous throughout our office. Plus, it is also very easy to discuss the results with the patient. For example, with a Wacom Bamboo Pen and touch tablets I am able to draw on the photographs and explain the disease without altering the original images.

Interoffice Benefits

We have multiple office locations. This particular patient makes appointments at two different locations — one near his office and one near his home. Our EHR allows us to access his chart from either location. Before we had maximEyes, we had to coordinate the transfer of paper charts from office to office, which was no easy feat.

Another benefit occurs when I need to consult with our retinal specialist and we are not at the same location. We can both access the records and diagnostic tests and then review and discuss them from separate offices or home.

Working with Other Providers

Communication among specialty medical care providers with multi-organ diseases, such as diabetes, is extremely important.

In our EHR system we have a database of physician fax and email information. As we input data from an exam, it is assembled into a letter containing pertinent information and findings. With the tap of an electronic pen the letter is sent to the other doctors involved before this patient has even checked out of the office.

Demonstrating Meaningful Use

I contend that all of these examples show how the use of EHR benefits this patient and demonstrates a definition of "meaningful use." EHR is a powerful tool that can greatly benefit long-term diabetic patients.

MaximEyes will play a key role as our practice applies for federal incentives through the HITECH Act. The company stands by its commitment to deliver a certified EHR that complies with certification standards and meaningful use rules. ■



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