



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

EFFECTIVE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MAY PREVENT DISABILITY

Effective information technology should improve outcomes of medical care, reduce medical errors and prevent diminished health that could contribute to disability.

A forum was held on “Health Information Technology and Health Reform”: Linking Incentives to Drive Accountability and Value” at the Brookings Institution. Presenters at the forum were former Secretary of Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), State directors of health services, an expert from the Department of Health and Human Services, an administrator of model health systems, a representative from a large corporation, and an association of the medical profession.

Summary

Information technology (IT) holds considerable promise for improving how health care is delivered in the U.S. and may play a role in changing the current system. The goals of IT are to improve care, reduce cost, stimulate innovation, protect privacy, and improve outcomes. However, at present, few hospitals and physicians implement IT. Nine percent of acute care hospitals and 13% of physicians have an IT system in place. Only one percent hospitals had used Web-based personal health record (PHR). The IT may be prohibitively expensive to purchase and maintain for small practices, \$25,000 to \$45,000 to purchase and \$3,000 to \$9,000 to maintain.

Disability Prevention Issue

The “meaningful use” standard of IT may have a positive impact on patient health, if the focus is on *improving patient health*. rather than on the technical aspects of IT.

Integrated data for care coordination from pharmacies, laboratories and providers may improve medication adherence, and reduce of duplicate tests that may reduce cost and improve patient outcomes.

Public health social determinants are responsible for 80% of health care. Most of the data related to social determinants are medically non-reimbursable and lie outside the medical delivery system and may not be part of an IT system that can be associated with essential health care decisions. For instance, many school districts, as a result of school wellness policies related to the Child Nutrition Act and State initiatives, have data to track obesity through BMIs. In addition, there may relevant health measures from school health clinics and counseling, and

employment based wellness programs that may not be a part of an IT system. A comprehensive IT system that incorporates social determinants of health may lead to better health care and public health decisions that prevent diminished health.

Intervention

A letter was written to the Director of the Engelberg Center requesting consideration for including social and environmental determinants as a greater part of IT activities.

Recommendation

There is need to include comprehensive data from public health social determinant functions in a health care IT system.