

WEARABLES



The fields of medicine, fitness, health and wellness, aging, and disabilities, to name a few, have seen an increase in technology geared towards the consumer “wearing”

devices that can positively influence their daily habits. Examples are daily step counters, medication and appointment reminders, and sleep monitoring.

These wearable devices, in most cases, out-perform mobile phones and laptops because the data collected is often accessible real-time using biofeedback and physiologic functions.

A DIGITAL PRACTICE

Usage of medical devices is already common in medical practice; think of home sleep apnea tests and portable ECG machines. The transition to wearables can be seamless. The key is communication and documentation.

So where does the conversation of “wearables” fit into a medical practice? For new patients, completing registration

forms including the question of device usage (brand, goal, etc.) is a great way to establish rapport, and easily incorporate goals and shared data in the patient’s regime. For current patients, staff can be trained to be in the habit of spotting wearables and asking patients during vital signs procedures if they use wearables. By initiating the conversation with patients and identifying health and fitness goals, this encourages them to take the lead in making positive decisions regarding their own health.

PATIENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Monitoring a patient’s habits once they leave your office is incredibly challenging; this presents a unique niche for medical practices struggling with patients who are not compliant.

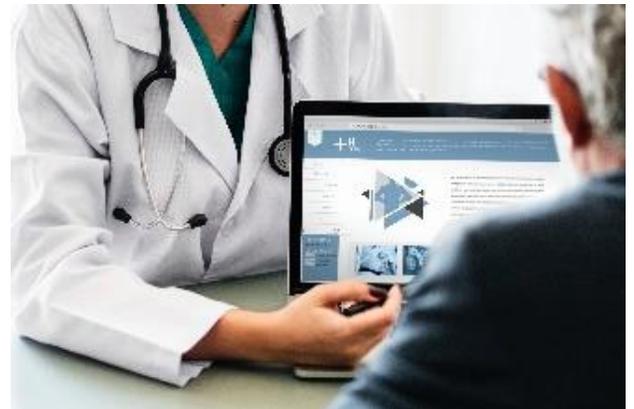
Patients who are suffering from a chronic disease or multiple co-morbidities may benefit from devices that trigger alerts to caregivers, case managers and even physician offices in the hopes of preventing unnecessary hospitalizations while helping the patient remain at home.

Listed below are a few concerns and solutions regarding “wearables” that may assist with patient participation:

- Cost – the average cost for a “wearable” is \$290. This can prove to be a challenge for patients who are on limited incomes or with competing financial priorities.

- Access – some hospitals and insurance companies have launched programs providing qualified patients a wearable at little to no cost and most have support teams who contact enrolled patients via phone or in person to ensure effectiveness, commitment and promote engagement.
- Patient Engagement – Additional education may be needed for patients who are not tech savvy or are intimidated. Offering an educational session during lunchtime or an afterhours/weekend class may prove beneficial.
- Patient Support – Once patients are successfully using “wearables”, how will you support them if questions arise from the data collected? Piloting a program with 5- 10 patients and using a nurse or medical assistant to call these patients weekly for support can be a great place to start.

Promotion of wearables in your medical practice can be an effective tool to add to your prescribing arsenal; it is noninvasive and a cost-effective approach to managing your patient population focusing on patient commitment and personal accountability.



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