



Internet Medicine™

A CRITICAL GUIDE

July 2003, 8.7

In This Issue...

HIPAA Watch

HHS Promotes Standardization for Medical Vocabulary, E-Health Records 5

FAQs Provide Answers On Payment Activity Under HIPAA. 6

Trends & Innovations

Nutrition Advice? Use Your PDA 7

Robotic Courier Transports Hospital Medical Records. 9

Site Profile

Patient2Patient Offers Comprehensive Guides To Internet Health Information. 10

News in Brief 12

MCMC

LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Pennsylvania Psychiatrist Wins Patient Records Privacy Case

The battle over patient privacy between physicians and HMOs is now officially on. A health plan asked a Pennsylvania doctor to provide five patient records with names, addresses and personal details for quality review purposes. The doctor refused, claiming the request violated the doctor-patient relationship.

The health plan then fired the physician, Daniel S. Shrager, M.D., for violating its policy and procedures. Shrager sued the HMO, claiming that patient confidentiality rules prohibit insurers from reviewing a patient's records without the patient's permission. The Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County agreed. In a case that is believed to be the first of its kind, the court ruled that the doctor was wrongly terminated after refusing to pro-

vide records that included information that identified his patients.

Shrager, a Pittsburgh psychiatrist, provides psychiatric care and treatment to patients insured by Highmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Magellan Behavioral Health and Green Spring Health Services, Inc., are sister corporations that provide utilization review services in connection with the behavioral health component of managed health plans.

Shrager entered into a provider agreement with Green Spring, which required him to comply with all of Green Spring's policies and procedures or face termination from the program.

In April 2000, Magellan informed Shrager that they would review five treatment records, including three open and

Continued on page 2

TRENDS & INNOVATIONS

Online Information in Spanish Serves Needs of Latino Patients

Health insurers with significant numbers of Hispanic people among their membership are creating websites and web-based tools to present targeted health information and plan resources in Spanish. It's proving to be an effective way to help this population overcome at least one barrier to accessing information.

Spanish-speaking adults in our country are a growing user group of online services and information. In fact, a speaker at the recent National Hispanic Publishers Convention reported that Latinos are one of the fastest growing segments of the Internet-using population. Eduardo Menascé, president of Verizon's Enterprise Solutions unit, said that more than half of the 22 million Hispanics adults in the U.S. already are online. A study done in 2000 by the Yankelovich research organization showed that 82 percent of Hispanics actively seek information about their



health, compared with 62 percent of non-Hispanics.

PacifiCare is a health plan based in California and serving members in that state plus seven others. According to Russell Bennett, vice president of Latino health solutions, PacifiCare has a "significant" number of Hispanic members in four of those states: California, Arizona, Texas and Colorado.

Continued on page 4

“She’s a little dot on the screen, so we always know where she is.”

SITE PROFILE

Patient2Patient Offers Comprehensive Guides To Internet Health Information

Health information on the Internet is like the offerings on any other mass medium: There’s a lot of it out there, but not all of it is good. Type a disease or condition into a search engine and your search result could include hundreds of thousands of listings.

With its potential to reach millions of people, the Internet has great possibilities for health education and advocacy. But separating the wheat from the chaff — finding credible, helpful, reasonable infor-

mation — can be daunting. That’s where Patient2Patient hopes to help.

Founded by Andrew J. Robinson, JD, a New York City trial attorney and cancer survivor, Patient2Patient is on a mission to provide and create eHealth services and information for patients and caregivers. The company’s first offering is a series of downloadable medical “WebGuides” that provide detailed, annotated reviews of the best and the brightest online resources focused on a particular disease or condi-

Robotic Courier Transports

Continued from page 9

planned for ahead of time. And if there are any changes to hospital layout, due to construction, for example, you simply update the robot’s map.

“What’s most unique about the Help-Mate robot is the navigation and how it behaves when it meets an obstacle,” Babbitt says. “It uses lasers and sensors to ‘see’ and most of the time it can simply move around something in its way.”

Security Features

Several security features help control and monitor access to whatever “cargo” the robot is carrying, Babbitt explains. Each user has a unique identification and password to access the touch screen. In addition, an image of each user’s fingerprint is stored in the memory of the robot, and the user’s registered fingerprint must be used to access the cargo. And finally, each transaction is recorded to help monitor access to the robot.

“We have a dedicated computer in our office that allows us to follow Gizmo in the hospital,” Radley notes. “She’s a little dot on the screen, so we always know where she is.”

Warm Welcome

At Children’s Hospital, the HelpMate robot got a welcoming party, and patients and family were treated to robot cookies and robot pictures to color.

“We had a contest when we first introduced the robot to decide what to call it,

and that’s how Gizmo got her name,” Radley explains. “We also added graphics to give her a ‘face’ and other friendly features. She’s still a novelty to new patients but they quickly become used to seeing her, and they greet her when they do.”

Babbitt says they encourage customers to name their robots. Customers also can choose whether their robot has a male or female voice.

“People tend to humanize the robot, to make it part of their ‘team,’” Babbitt says. “We’ve had customers dress their robots for Halloween and other holidays. When they get a new robot, they give the old one a retirement party. They develop a relationship of sorts with the robot.”

Babbitt notes that it’s rare for the Help-Mate robot to “take away someone’s job.” Radley says that Gizmo saved Children’s from having to replace their antiquated trolley system. And she’s actually helped to improve staff satisfaction.

“We’re able to provide better service for the people in the hospital who need medical records,” Radley says.

What’s It Worth?

Neither Radley nor Babbitt would reveal the cost of Gizmo, but Babbitt said that if used on a 24-hour schedule, the expense for the robot would be about \$5 a day. Customers can buy or lease a HelpMate robot, which can carry up to 200 pounds in its cargo area. “The real savings comes from a labor-saving standpoint,” Babbitt says. “Hospitals save on the cost to provide transport labor.” ▼

tion. From the website (www.patient2patient.net), visitors can find guides to Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy and Parkinson's disease. Guides to other conditions and diseases are being developed and scheduled to be released later this year, according to Robinson. The WebGuides are sold on a one-year subscription basis and updated every 90 days. Currently the subscription fee is \$21.99 per guide.

"Our goal is to provide a carefully guided source to the sites we've included in each guide," says Robinson. "We want to help Internet users not only see but also understand what they will find on the site. The guides provide visual cues and help direct users to the information that's most useful to them."

Robinson says the guides were researched and developed by medical and professional research staff who combed the Internet to find "the best medically accurate sites and information." The company maintains a medical advisory board, he notes, as well as a medical director on staff. Each guide is reviewed by board-certified specialists in the appropriate field. The information is then organized into 20 different topic areas focusing on the issues and concerns that patients and their caregivers confront during the course of their illness.

'Medical Credibility'

"Medical credibility is our top criteria," Robinson says. "But we also try to offer a range of sites with different tones and styles. And we wanted to address all the issues people may be dealing with during the various stages of their illness, beyond the physical. And that includes emotional, financial, family, legal, insurance and even end-of-life issues."

From his personal experience confronting a diagnosis of leukemia, Robinson says that only about 10 percent of what patients are concerned with are their symptoms; 90 percent is "the other stuff." He talked with other patients as well, who described their concerns during the course of treatment.

Patient2Patient's WebGuides are divided according to the following categories of information:

- Diagnosis & Treatment Decisions**
- Disease and Condition Background
- Treatments
- Specialty Doctors
- Specialty Hospitals
- Clinical Trials



Support

- Day-to-Day Concerns
- Caregiver Resources
- Online Support Groups
- Local Support Groups
- Individual's Websites

Resources

- National Organizations
- Insurance Information
- Medication Assistance Programs
- Benefit Programs
- Free Airline Travel

Tools

- Medication Information
- Drug Interaction Databases
- Medical Dictionaries and Encyclopedias
- Diagnostic and Lab Test Glossaries
- Complementary/Alternative Therapies
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine
- Diet and Nutrition
- Herbal Databases
- News and Updates
- Medical Journals
- Medical News
- Emails and Newsletters for Patients
- Emails and Newsletters for Caregivers
- Listservs

The WebGuides are available in either a PDF or Word format, and run to more than 175 pages on average. They are "interactive," allowing users to link to the website in question straight from the guide. Robinson says he plans to offer the guides to physicians on a licensing-fee basis to be shared with patients. "Most physicians want their patients to be informed," he says. "But they are limited in the amount of time they can spend per patient. We feel our WebGuides can facilitate a dialog and help strengthen the physician-patient relationship." ▼

Special Offer

Patient2Patient has offered Internet Medicine subscribers the opportunity to view and download a sample complementary WebGuide for the next 30 days. The offer is available through August 29.

To download a guide, go to:

www.Patient2Patient.net
On the Home Page, click on the "Subscribers" button.

For the Log In, enter:
IM@patient2patient.net

For the Password enter:
medicine (follow the prompts to download a guide).