

NHS patients could be asked to Skype their doctor

People could be given the opportunity to consult their doctor through online video calls as an alternative to meeting them face to face, ministers have indicated. Conservative MP Daniel Kawczynski asked the government what steps were being taken to encourage consultations with doctors through the online telephony application Skype, which he said could help patients avoid waiting to see their doctor. In response, health minister Simon Burns said improving care through digital technologies had been highlighted in the government's NHS "information revolution" consultation. "Skype is one example of how such improvement can be effected," he said. But the minister added that deployment of Skype by doctors would be a "local, rather than central, decision". Burns said the Department of Health was looking at "opportunities to incentivize" the use of digital technology in its forthcoming NHS information strategy. The government was said to be looking at online meetings and consultations, as well as initiatives like telehealth to improve care.

Doctors could treat school students remotely: bill approved by Georgia lawmakers.

The House of Representatives voted 157-1 on Thursday to approve legislation allowing school districts to include consultations with offsite health care providers as part of their school nurse programs. Supporters say using technology that allows doctors to treat patients long distance will help rural school systems in Georgia and cut down on expensive emergency room visits. The bill now heads to Republican Gov. Nathan Deal's desk.

Grameenphone supports telemedicine project

Bangladeshi mobile operator Grameenphone has signed an agreement with Telemedicine Working Group of Bangladesh (TWGBD) for a pilot tele-dermatology project through Community Information Centers (CIC). This project will enable patients suffering from skin diseases to consult with a specialised doctor in real time via store and forward method with the help of Digital Imaging and Communication in Telemedicine (DICOT) and the Telemedicine Information, Management and Education System (TIMES). For the pilot phase, four CICs will be equipped with all the telemedicine hardware and software. The CICs will also provide a printed version of the online prescription and will maintain a database of each consultation for future reference. Upon the successful implementation of the initial pilot phase, other medical services could be incorporated.

Hillingdon offers free pendant alarms to older people (UK)

Over the past year the London Borough of Hillingdon's TeleCareLine service has been offering free telecare packages to residents over the age of 85 [85 and over, surely? Or do they really have to be 86?]. The scheme has successfully added 960 installations since 1 April 2011, 400 of which were self-referrals. The standard package comprises a Tunstall Lifeline Connect+ alarm, a MyAmie+ pendant, a bogus call [sic] alarm and a smoke detector. Additional sensors are provided according to need.

VivaCell-MTS launches Mobile-Health pilot project

VivaCell-MTS and the Cardiology Clinic of Nork-Marash Medical Center, in cooperation with Ericsson Nikola Tesla company have announced the launch of Mobile-Health pilot project. Areas of application of the Mobile-Health are mostly in cardiology and pulmonology. The innovative solution

can be used in remote diagnostics support, the treatment of chronically ill patients and those with long-term illnesses, as well as in the treatment of patients living in rural areas having insufficient access to medical care, patients discharged early from hospitals or those in homecare settings, post-operative monitoring, etc. Among the alarming problems of the modernity are the increasing numbers of chronic and long term patients worldwide, hundred millions of people suffering from asthma, diabetes, etc. Every year about 17 million people are dying from cardiovascular diseases. On the other hand, the number of elderly population (65+) is increasing steadily. If in 2007 only 7% of the population was over 65 years old, this number will increase to 10% in 2025, and to 16% in 2050.

Wrist watch-style oximeter developed (Israel)

Israel-based OxiTone is the developer of a wrist-worn oximeter which measures blood oxygen levels continuously, sending the information via Bluetooth to a wearer's smartphone. Oxygen saturation is a key vital sign for those with COPD. Current 'pulse-ox' meters are generally clipped to a fingertip or earlobe several times a day. Unlike these, this wristwatch style can be worn continuously (but Ed. Donna questions factors like comfort.) Other consumer uses for oximeters are for athletes monitoring oxygen blood levels during workouts. Currently in clinical trials in Israel and expected to be in-market by 2013. (The Times of Israel article contends it does not need FDA approval as it is a consumer device--a misconception due to unfamiliarity with US regulations, surely.)

Robots Invade Telemedicine

iRobot has agreed to a \$6 million investment and expanded partnership with InTouch Health (www.intouchhealth.com), a leading remote presence telemedicine solution provider. InTouch Health has already earned FDA approval for its telepresence technology, and under the agreement, iRobot will be provided with access to FDA regulated healthcare facilities such as hospitals, emergency care facilities, patient wards, and operating rooms. The two companies will also collaborate on a wide variety of technologies across each of the company's patent portfolios and leverage combined expertise in remote presence telemedicine solutions.

Bill to Establish Pilot

Massachusetts State Senator Michael O. Moore (D-MA) introduced bill (MA SB 520) in the current legislative session to establish a pilot program to test whether using telemedicine to provide medical services to inmates at 14 county correctional facilities would be effective in reducing healthcare and medical expenses. The state Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) would oversee the program and would designate one of the County facilities to lead the effort. The pilot program needs to be implemented 120 days after enactment of the legislation. The required equipment would enable video conferencing, remote vital sign measurement capabilities, software to process the information, broadband to communicate, software to allow remote physicians to connect via their PC plus other appropriate devices and software. The legislation requires that 45 days after the legislation is enacted, a Request for Proposal (RFP) for telemedicine systems should be released. Preference will be given to prime contractors headquartered in the state.

New California law seeks to expand telehealth services for Medicaid beneficiaries

A new California law (AB 415) is expanding access to health care services in rural areas through the use of telehealth. The law allows for a broader range of telehealth services, expands the definition of telehealth providers to include all licensed healthcare professionals, expands telehealth care settings and allows state hospitals to establish medical credentials for telehealth providers more easily.

Doctors slow to engage patients with IT

A new study by the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions indicates physicians are not using IT broadly to engage patients. No more than 20 percent of doctors are providing online scheduling or test results for their patients and just 6 percent are using social media to communicate with them, according to Deloitte. The report, "Physician Perspectives on Health Information Technology," shows that measured against the IT goals and deadlines prescribed by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, only 25 percent of physicians are "on target" to meet the meaningful use incentives.

How telemedicine can boost results, save costs

It may not be as sexy as something we might see in the latest Hollywood sci-fi thriller, but telemedicine is making some pretty incredible strides in healthcare. One of its biggest successes is getting people to actively monitor their own health. The difference that telehealth makes is that patients send their health data to their nurses via technology from their own homes. It is increasingly touted as a way to improve the quality — and decrease the costs — of healthcare.

Teleophthalmology aids diabetic retinopathy screening in urban primary care setting

Teleophthalmology may be effective in screening for diabetic retinopathy in urban primary care offices, a speaker said. At the Wills Eye Institute Alumni Conference, Dr. Christopher J. Brady presented early results of a pilot study conducted by Wills Eye Institute and Jefferson Hospital Department of Family Medicine and funded by the U.S. Department of Defense.

Medical sensors could phone for help

A man struggling with drug addiction feels a craving coming on, but his next therapy appointment is not for another week. Right away, his cellphone buzzes, offering a breathing exercise, a motivational message, or even just a distracting game. And his doctor can check on him remotely and alter the messages, if his stress is not alleviated. For now, this telemedicine scenario is in the future. But in a small pilot program, researchers from the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have created technologies that ultimately will enable cellphones to automatically detect and intervene when a person suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or substance abuse problems needs support.

UK wants docs to prescribe apps instead of some visits

England's National Health Service just announced it will encourage general practitioners to "prescribe" apps rather than actual doctors' visits whenever possible. The core idea is to get British patients to use mobile healthcare devices to monitor and track their ongoing health status, and identify (and solve) problems before they require a visit. It's couched as a quality of care move, but also as a money-saving maneuver for the state-funded healthcare system.

Technology makes healthcare more convenient

Mention a house call and the image that comes to mind is likely one of a doctor carrying a stethoscope and a small black medical bag. But today, a doctor making a house call may be more likely to be carrying a portable X-ray machine. Technology has changed the way we live, and the medical field is no different. From portable medical equipment, digital X-rays, remote-monitoring, employee-management and smartphone applications, technology is changing the way patients receive treatment.

Telemedicine connects specialists, cystic fibrosis patients

Adults living with cystic fibrosis in Greater Sudbury and northeastern Ontario are able to connect with specialists at St. Michael's Hospital through telemedicine. These telemedicine sessions supplement the twice-yearly satellite clinic held at Health Sciences North for adult patients with cystic fibrosis, led by a physician at St. Michael's Hospital. "The telemedicine clinic is working very well for our adult patients with cystic fibrosis," said Sharri-Lynn Zinger, a registered nurse who co-ordinates the telemedicine clinic.

New smartphone app helps patients fight anxiety disorder symptoms

Harvard University researchers have created a simple new app that could dramatically reduce the symptoms of patients with anxiety disorders, according to a recent New York Times article. The still-to-be-named app, was studied in a 338-patient trial, and used a psychological approach called "cognitive bias modification." The idea is to help anxiety disorder sufferers short-circuit anxious or negative thought cycles when in stressful situations.

Upcoming Events

Don't miss out on the largest telehealth event of the year:

ATA 2012 in San Jose, Calif. ATA 2012 (April 29 to May 1 in San Jose, Calif.)

2012 Aging in America Conference Washington, D.C., 28 March - 1 April 2012

International Congress on
Telehealth and Telecare 2012
The King's Fund, London, United
Kingdom
March 6-8, 2012

Telemedicine
Experience@Prospects
Donetsk, Ukraine
March 19-20, 2012

Med-e-Tel 2012
Luxembourg

April 18-20, 2012

ISPHT 2012
Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.
May 14-16, 2011

World Health Care Congress
Europe
Amsterdam, Netherlands
May 23-24, 2012

IFA 11th Global Conference on
Ageing

Prague, Czech Republic
May 28 - June 1, 2012

3rd International Conference on
Transforming Healthcare with IT
Hyderabad, India
August 31 - Sept 1, 2012

Health 2.0 Europe (2012) Berlin,
Germany
Nov 6-7, 2012

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