

Remote Patient Monitoring: A Win-Win Situation

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Anyone familiar with classic TV commercial tag lines is likely to remember the ever-famous "I've fallen and I can't get up." Though originally used to sell senior customers on the importance of purchasing medical alert devices, this iconic catchphrase would continue to be a source of reference (and, unfortunately in some cases, mockery) among TV viewers and consumers for years down the line.

Now let's fast forward to 2010, where the widespread availability of pocket-sized cell phones and other such mobile devices has made it possible for those who are elderly or medically needy to go about their lives with the comfort of knowing that emergency assistance is only a phone call away. Rather than allow their conditions to inhibit their lifestyles, those who are older or living with chronic illnesses can celebrate their independence without having to retain home health workers to be at their beck and call.

Noting the many benefits inherent in open lines of communication, the medical field, in recent years, has taken the notion of connectivity one step further by introducing a number of devices that allow physicians to keep tabs on their patients remotely. From blood pressure monitors to glucose meters, these remote

monitoring devices are designed to enable doctors to manage a wide array of ailments and conditions in patients old and young.

In fact, remote patient monitoring is a concept that ties in to the general push throughout the healthcare industry to utilize technology in a manner that ultimately improves individual care. Along the lines of the electronic health record, today's remote monitoring devices are designed to generate patient data and provide updates as necessary, alert medical offices to potential medical problems or emergencies, and enable physicians to intervene before their patients' conditions get worse. In today's technological age, it simply doesn't get more streamlined or convenient than that.

So then why doesn't every doctor utilize such equipment? For one thing, the whole technology platform is something that many providers have been generally slow to adopt. Financial constraints, training requirements, and the mental barriers involved in accepting the fact that things are generally changing have all prevented the technological movement from fully taking the medical field by storm. Still, in today's digital age, it's getting increasingly difficult for doctors to continue making excuses as to why they are unable to offer their patients

the utmost in flexibility and care. And considering the fact that healthcare technology is clearly a prominent target on the government's radar, it wouldn't be surprising to notice a shift toward remote patient monitoring once EHR implementation truly kicks into full gear across the medical field.

Of course, despite the fact that the government's health IT initiative was designed

to ultimately benefit patients, providers, too, have much to gain logistically and financially by bringing their practices up to speed. So while some may find themselves longing for the days where phones had rotary dials and there was no such thing as a text message, given the advances in medical technology today, one can't help but admit that it's a pretty great time to be on either end of the spectrum.