

Four New Trends in Medicine To look forward to

Here are some longer-term changes and implementations highlights.

Aimed primarily at generating the optimum cost/quality/result balance and at making the best use of resources while providing the most effective results, these innovations will bring patients the benefits and success they may not always enjoy at this time.

The switch from a quantity, fee-for-service, wasteful, high cost and inefficiency system to one encouraging provider cooperation, patient participation, prevention and better management is likely to encounter hurdles and resistance, but will ultimately go a long way to resolving the healthcare system existentialist problems seen today.

1. Predictive Medicine

Prepare for the rise in interest in your health by your insurance company, employer or governmental agencies (especially if they insure you). And for an early interest, before symptoms, before your first medical consultation and before you get that first prescription or treatment. It's all about risk, and how to minimize it in a system with scarcer resources, fewer denial options for insurance companies, reduced payments and greater access to data.

The legal precedent set by the Supreme Court now allows genetic tests to become "generic". Once reserved to the already ill (i.e. breast cancer patients being tested in order to pinpoint the better treatment) or the at-risk population (those with a family or personal history), these genetic tests will multiply in scope and reach. According to Robert M. Wenzel, owner of London Global Laboratories, gene analysis will accurately predict of an individual's risks, based on algorithms derived from the analysis supported by Electronic Health Records and the universal access to and sharing of medical data.

Predictions about a risk of disease, about the success of a specific treatment, or the effectiveness of a particular drug will become part of the medical arsenal. By making an early diagnosis (and with a prompt intervention), physicians will take a more efficient, pro-active stance, while patients benefit from cheaper, less invasive and more curative outcomes.

2. Preventative Medicine

Once risks have been established, and for the population as a whole, expect an early intervention from those interested in your health, whether for clinical or financial reasons. The US system is definitely turning into a prevention-centric system, similar to the other health systems in developed countries, almost all of whom are government-run.

Learning to practice medicine from a more technical and technological approach is new to medical providers. This trend will not be reversed; and physicians not "on board" may soon lose patients and funding and see a dip in their ratings or reputation.

The new models point to a sharp learning curve, which the medical profession, and many patients, have been resisting out of fear, ignorance or financial concern. Stepping into a smarter, less invasive, more focused and better adapted system is not only good medicine, but the only way all players can survive and thrive.

We will be seeing an accelerated number of new innovations, technologies, models and guidelines. Based on real time data, easily quantified and verified, these changes will not only bring the healthcare system into the current technological age, but will soon catch up with most other developed countries. The benefits and health levels enjoyed by those members can become a real possibility for all US consumers too. Financial rewards, in the form of lowered costs and elimination of waste, would also benefit all of us.

Conclusion:

Personalized healthcare and these new trends mostly mean "**transparent healthcare**".

Access to medical records, widespread information, public data banks and analyses, as well as the monitoring of one's own bio readings can encourage communication and coordination of efforts. Rather than accepting a prescription or treatment at face value, patients will become more aware of risks, options and costs. Better informed about their diagnosis and a partner in their physician's decision, they will be able to participate more fully in their care.

The days of turning one's life over to a physician with little participation and an obscure understanding might well be counted, as self-responsibility becomes a more essential and necessary part of the process. It can be easily argued that early detection, screenings, and prompt intervention will save lives and certainly dollars.

But it will be even cheaper and better for all if the population, especially as it ages, remains healthy and independent as long as possible without entering a hospital or being diagnosed with an incurable chronic condition. Hopefully, the entry of medicine into the age of responsible, applied, personalized and proven technology can help achieve this goal.

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