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Managing the pain: Michigan docs put data to work on patient care

February 02, 2009 | Bernie Monegain, Editor

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Fred Davis, MD, knows all about the power of data. He's been witnessing its growing effect on pain management for more than 25 years.

With the emphasis on value-based medicine, the patient management system called PRISM that Davis developed 10 years ago and has been improving year by year - from floppy disc to Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet to its computer-based incarnation, may get its time in the sun.

He figures the data gathering system could be applied not only to other pain management practices, but to other specialties and chronic diseases as well. And it could also be a boon for research.

Davis, a pain management specialist, is president of ProCare Systems, a company that provides physician practices with management services such as billing, scheduling and marketing.

The ProCare network includes four pain management practices with more than 20 pain management physicians at 13 locations across Michigan.

"As we see it, there will be a shift in reimbursement away from paying for individual services toward payment for providing optimum care," Davis said.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, the founder of the Center for Health Transformation, apparently is on the same wavelength. The focus of healthcare reform must be on best practices, data-driven healthcare and reimbursement, he said during a teleconference last month.

"We must focus on outcome," Gingrich said.

"We're on the cusp of a new era," Davis said. "The question is how can we improve the quality of the system?"

Before he developed PRISM, Davis had observed that executives had detailed quantitative data to make their business decisions while clinical decisions were still based on anecdotal information.

The most recent version of PRISM is written in Clarion Professional Developer Enterprise Edition with a Microsoft SQL Server backend.

The fact that PRISM stores data in SQL Server database makes it possible to easily merge information from other applications – GE Centricity on the business side and SRS Freedom Chart Manager, said ProCare CIO Gil Lola. In turn, it makes it possible to create meaningful reports on all aspects of patient care and response to treatment.

Today, seven of ProCare's 13 clinics use PRISM. The others are slated for implementation over the next couple of years.

Davis sees potential beyond ProCare. For instance, primary care practices might use it as a proactive tool to head off serious diseases.

There is also potential in research, public health and the business side of healthcare.

ProCare is collaborating with Priority Health, a Michigan health management organization on new ways to share and use the data.

"The future for this is really outstanding," Davis said.

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