

Project HealthDesign

Rethinking the Power and Potential of Personal Health Records

www.projecthealthdesign.org



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Who We Are

Project HealthDesign is a \$5 million national program designed to support health and information technology pioneers in creating a new generation of personal health record (PHR) systems that can share common technical functions. The project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Pioneer Portfolio, which funds innovative ideas that may lead to future breakthroughs in health and health care, with additional support from the California HealthCare Foundation.

Project HealthDesign funded nine multidisciplinary teams to develop PHR applications that extend and enhance the range of services offered by existing PHRs. Through creative use of information technology that is guided by extensive user-centered design activities, this bold new program provides a variety of tools and services that draw on clinical records and relevant information from people's daily lives. The *Project HealthDesign* teams' PHR applications go beyond providing access to health information to interpret consumers' health data and provide customized, easy-to-use feedback that can guide daily health decisions and empower consumers to manage their health more effectively. The grantees' prototypes are now being tested by patients and families to help them manage complex health data, improve their health and get the care they need. Complementing the individual work of each team, technical specialists created a common platform of computer resources that will make it easier and more efficient in the future to build highly tailored PHR tools.

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The Challenge

Today's health care system focuses primarily on acute, episodic care and places less emphasis on managing health over the long term. The *Project HealthDesign* team based at the University of Washington is working to bridge these two approaches by providing a personal health record (PHR) application that helps people to better manage their chronic illnesses with better "between visit" care management. More timely communication between chronically ill patients and their team of health care providers allows patients to feel better on a day-to-day basis, knowing that they can get feedback when they need it and reducing the tendency for patients to wait until a problem springs up before seeing their doctor. To move toward better self-management, the University of Washington team is using mobile phones and the Internet to shift the focus of health care away from the office and into the flow of patients' daily lives.

The Solution: Where We Are

The team is currently building on previous successful studies that use the Internet to connect patients with type 2 diabetes to their health care providers. Based on in-depth interviews with patients from these studies, the team is modifying its design to also use cell phones to make this link. Their findings suggest that individuals with diabetes would like more timely feedback from healthcare providers on how to better manage diabetes and related health conditions. To better facilitate patient-provider communication, the team has developed a prototype system to allow patients to easily transmit and review their health records with their health care provider, using the cell phone and the portable computer. It enables individuals to record their blood glucose levels and dietary information and quickly upload these readings wirelessly, over a cell phone, to their provider. Patients review their information together with their provider, incorporate it into their personal health record, and revise their plan of care accordingly.

In most cases, these technologies are already part of users' everyday lives. Ultimately, the PHR system not only encourages patients to improve their self-management skills; it also fosters an ongoing and collaborative dialogue between patients and physicians.

Patients testing the prototype said they appreciate that these tools help them to connect with providers that already know and care for them. While the team is testing the application with diabetes patients, it can easily be used for other chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure.