

## Mobile personal health record launched in Canada

Written by Wendy Glauser on November 9, 2011  
MiHealth is the brainchild of Ontario's Dr. Wendy Graham



Dr. Wendy Graham (right) and two patients display the MiHealth system on an iPad.

TORONTO | A new software platform that gives patients secure, mobile access to their health record will increase efficiency and patient outcomes in health care, according to the Toronto-based company that's launching it.

The MiHealth system allows patients to access medical information, including their diagnoses, family history, immunizations, medication and allergies, on a password-protected electronic platform via a mobile phone or personal computer. The patient can then share this information with other primary care doctors, specialists or family members by e-mailing, printing or faxing it, according to Dr. Wendy Graham, president of MiHealth Global Systems.

The doctor and patient decide together how often the information is updated, whether it's annually or numerous times throughout the year, explained Dr. Graham, who has long pushed for reforms, such as family health teams, to increase primary health care efficiency.

It's also up to the physician to decide what they charge patients for updating a MiHealth personal health record (PHR), though it's expected doctors would charge "a once-a-year form fee" unless a patient's case is highly complicated, said Dr. Graham. While MiHealth is currently available free to doctors, patients who opt for the system pay the company a flat rate of \$59 a year (in addition to form fees paid to the doctor).

MiHealth Global Systems has partnered with Merck Canada to promote the technology, which is currently being offered to doctors across Canada. In the initial roll-out phase, 20 physicians have so far signed up, said Dr. Graham.

The mobile PHR can benefit elderly patients who want to share information about their medications to caregivers, help patients provide accurate medical information to doctors who aren't their primary provider and decrease the number of incomplete referrals, said Dr. Graham. "With long waits for specialists, often a patient has had more tests or something medically has happened since the referral was made," said Dr. Graham. "Now the patient can send the specialist their most up-to-date information."

In addition, patients can both send encrypted messages to their doctor and receive encrypted information from their primary care office.

"Rather than having to call multiple times, the physician's office can send a message saying your CAT scan has been booked and this is how you need to prepare," said Dr. Graham. On the patient side, the majority of messages concern scheduling or changing appointments, said Dr. Graham.

Dr. Graham stressed that information from EMRs are not automatically loaded on to the PHR. Differential diagnoses or other information that may unnecessarily concern the patient are not included.

That said, however, MiHealth is looking into offering actual lab reports to patients via the PHR, perhaps with a two-to-three day lag period to give physicians a chance to help patients interpret serious results.

Dr. Kevin Leonard (PhD), an associate professor in health policy and someone who has taken an active role in managing his Crohn's disease over several decades, thinks PHR systems—especially those that offer access to lab results—will be a boon to those with chronic diseases.

"Personal health records give patients the opportunity to be another set of eyes on their condition and flag changes," said Dr. Leonard. An example Dr. Leonard gives is that while a doctor may simply see iron counts are "normal," a Crohn's patient might notice that their iron count has been gradually declining over time and take steps to remedy the situation before iron levels are below normal.

"Patients are very anxious to help the physicians get it right because they have the most at stake," explained Dr. Graham, who is a member of the Medical Post's physician advisory board. While patient learning curves will likely accompany the roll-out of PHRs, Dr. Graham says she's confident that when patients are custodians of their health information, the opportunities for patient-physician collaboration in preventative care will mean fewer emergency room visits and long-term savings.

Tags: personal health record, PHR