

“Meaningful Connections: A resource guide for using health IT to support the patient centered medical home”

1. Why this Resource Guide, and why now?

A: Right now there is unprecedented urgency to change the way health care in the U.S. is delivered—among policy makers, employer/purchasers, provider groups and consumer organizations. The patient centered medical home (PCMH) model has been embraced by more than 400 health care stakeholders as a means to elevate the priority of the provider-patient relationship in the health care delivery process. A key element of the PCMH is the use of health information technology (health IT) to support the overarching principles of the PCMH.

The recently-enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act designates that \$19 billion be directed towards investment in a health IT infrastructure. As plans are made to disperse those funds towards various projects and providers, this is the time to identify which of the myriad health IT capabilities and functionalities are essential to support the PCMH. The Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative’s Center for eHealth Information Adoption and Exchange (CeHIA) envisions that this Resource Guide will expand dialogue to bring a better understanding of “meaningful use” of health IT in the context of the PCMH.

2. What's in the Resource Guide?

A: The Resource Guide includes:

- A chapter defining the health IT capabilities considered essential to support the tenets of the PCMH, as well as a discussion of the “connected medical home”;
- A chapter that crosswalks the capabilities in Chapter 1 with defined functional priorities to support the PCMH. This chapter includes detailed charts that answer *why* these functions are essential, as well as listing specific functionalities that correspond with the general functionality categories;
- A chapter exploring how patients/consumers are currently using health IT to connect with providers, as well as innovations, opportunities and challenges on the horizon; and
- A representative sample (19) of responses from provider practices in the field to a survey exploring current use of health IT, their experiences in improving patient engagement, care processes, health outcomes and lessons learned from the field.
- The report also includes three appendices: Guidelines for PCMH Demonstration Projects, Health Information Technology Consumer Principles, and the InformationSTAT Toolkit to raise consumer and provider awareness of the benefits of health IT.

3. How was the Resource Guide created?

A: The information contained in the report is the product of months of labor by members of two CeHIA working groups, the Capabilities Working Group and the Functionalities Working Group. These groups were charged with defining the capabilities and functionalities of health IT that are essential to support the PCMH. The Resource Guide itself was produced by Health2 Resources for CeHIA through a grant from Merck, with contributions from the Working Group leadership, CeHIA leadership, and other experts in the field. Health2 Resources also administered a survey on behalf of the CeHIA to obtain current case examples of use of HIT at the practice level.

4. Why did you choose to define capabilities and functionalities rather than specific products?

A: While many health IT products are available to fit the needs of large provider practices, it is not clear that “one size fits all” when trying to match health IT products and services with smaller or mid-sized practices interested in supporting the tenets of the PCMH. There is also the challenge of how to provide products in a way that is affordable and sustainable across a variety of practice types, large and small. Rather than attempt to list products or suppliers of health IT, e.g. electronic medical records (EMRs) as single “solutions” to the problem of transforming practices into medical homes, the CeHIA chose to describe the *capabilities* that health IT ought to provide or enhance if a medical practice is to become a successful medical home. This approach has the advantage of being vendor-neutral, allowing for innovation, variation and choice in reaching the goal of the agreed-upon medical home principles. This approach also allows for expansion or modification of key capabilities according to the evolution of both the concept of the medical home and the technologies themselves.

5. How were the capabilities/functionalities needed to support the PCMH determined?

A: Over the past year, PCPCC member volunteers representing health care providers, policymakers, health IT vendors, health plans and employers met to gain consensus on a set of health IT capabilities and functionalities that are informed by the PCPCC Joint Principles and that recognize the central role of the primary care provider in overseeing continuous, coordinated care. Two working groups, the Capabilities Working Group and the Functionalities Working Group, met weekly over the months to clarify the priority elements from among the vast array of capabilities and functionalities currently in the marketplace.

Beginning with a survey of the literature, the Working Groups compiled an exhaustive list of potential capabilities, and then systematically placed them into categories. Using these categories, the groups mapped key capabilities to the Joint Principles of the PCMH to create an overall scheme that corresponds directly to the PCMH.

Over the course of the work, an important truth emerged: no particular one-size-fits-all health IT package will meet the needs of all practices, large and small, and all budgets. CeHIA concluded that both hard-wired solutions and newer Web-based solutions may provide technology tools that can support the tenets of the PCMH. While the group did identify core capabilities and corresponding functionalities to support the PCMH, it also concluded there may be a variety of paths to arrive there.

6. What was the purpose of the survey?

A: This was a non-scientific survey designed to gather field-level experiences in using health IT and to identify case examples that can educate, inform and advance the meaningful and effective use of health IT. The survey is the beginning of a larger task: development of a Resource Center that will provide information for integration of health

IT into PCMH pilot projects and physician practice transformation, as well as future information for value-based purchasing of health IT products and services. Survey responses are also expected to be the foundation for future case studies and other “boots-on-the-ground” materials.

7. Who was surveyed?

A: Members of the PCPCC, friends of the organization, and physician stakeholders were invited to complete the survey, which was fielded in February 2009. From responses received, 19 representative case examples were included in the Resource Guide. Each month, a new case example is presented during CeHIA member calls.

8. What were the key findings?

A: As a non-scientific survey, the intent was to identify current practices in the field, challenges, capabilities in use that fulfill the tenets of the PCPCC, known outcomes and results, as well as lessons learned.

Common themes that emerged:

- Health IT is a catalyst and a tool to support the PCMH, but not an end in itself.
- Health IT must be accompanied by practice transformation, workflow redesign, and must focus on the needs of patients.
- Once implemented, health IT becomes a way of life for the practitioner, enhancing practice efficiency, collaboration, and patient satisfaction.

9. What are the next steps?

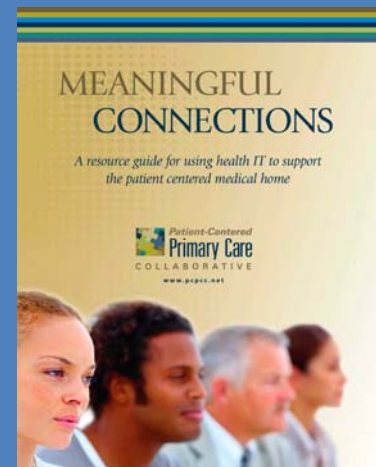
The survey garnered more than 100 examples of health IT activity on the ground, representing the first steps of a journey to develop a Resource Center for use of health IT in the PCMH context. The CeHIA plans to use these responses, as well as other resources, to track the speed and extent of adoption of health IT, and to produce the following resources:

- Best practices/case examples of using health IT and exchange to support the PCMH;
- Results of other surveys and research;
- Public policy, federal and state legislative language and executive orders;
- Catalog of pilot or operational projects using standard format; and
- Reference guide of health IT vendors and consultants.

For more information or to join the Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC) visit www.pcpcc.net

To learn more about the work of the PCPCC Center for eHealth Information Adoption and Exchange (CeHIA) go to: <http://www.pcpcc.net/content/enter-ehealth-information-adoption-and-exchange>

To obtain a copy of this report go to: www.pcpcc.net



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