The Meaningful Use of Information Therapy (Ix®): From Ix to Patient Response (Px)

Donald W. Kemper, Healthwise, Boise, ID, USA
Molly Mettler, Healthwise, Boise, ID, USA

ABSTRACT

Information Therapy (Ix), getting the right information to the right person at the right time in order to help the person make an informed health decision, is a field that is constantly evolving. Over the past decade, several changes — particularly technological and policy-based developments — have helped to advance the model. This paper traces the evolution of Information Therapy from a good idea to one that has been widely adopted by clinicians. This paper emphasizes the use of the electronic medical record (EMR) in delivering information therapy prescriptions directly to patients. Patient Response (Px) is proposed as the next phase in the evolution of Information Therapy and patient-centered care.

Keywords: Doctor-Patient Relationship, Electronic Medical Record (EMR), Health Information Technology, Health Level 7 (HL7), Infobutton Standard, Information Prescriptions, Information Therapy (Ix), Meaningful Use, Patient Response, Patient Response (Px)

INTRODUCTION

Information Therapy (Ix) is a field that is constantly evolving. From the early nineties to our foray in 2002 with the publication of “Information Therapy: Prescribed Information as a Reimbursable Medical Service,” (Kemper & Mettler, 2002) and beyond, health professionals, librarians, medical informaticists and others have advanced the idea that consumer health information and information prescriptions can be, and should be, part of patient care. Over the past decade, several changes — particularly technological and policy-based developments — have helped to advance the model.

In this paper, we trace the progress of Information Therapy from an idea searching for a definition to its current use and practice. Special attention is paid to the use of the electronic medical record (EMR) in delivering information therapy prescriptions directly to patients. And, we propose the next phase in the evolution of Information Therapy: Patient Response, or Px.

DOI: 10.4018/ijudh.2013040101
A BRIEF HISTORY OF INFORMATION THERAPY

How is medical advice different from information therapy? There is not really anything new with the idea of providing medical advice; it has been around since the very first doctor-patient encounter. Doctors and patients agree that that the most valuable of all medical services is the advice the doctor gives to the patient. Information therapy intensifies that value. With information therapy, the information that is shared with the patient is considered as important as any medical test, or treatment or drug, and hence needs to be considered as therapy. Health information is not just about care. Information is care.

The idea of information as therapy started to gain traction in the US in the nineties and into the new millennium. In the U.S., a medical librarian was one of the first to advocate for putting health information directly into the hands of patients. In 1992, Katherine Lindner, MLS, RN, wrote an editorial in JAMA in which she encouraged medical libraries to become accessible for use by patients and their families. “Every scrap of information leading patients in the direction of discovering more about their disease becomes ‘information therapy.’” (Lindner, 1992) Donna Mitchell, a medical informaticist, proposed a more formal definition: “the therapeutic provision of information to people for the amelioration of physical and mental health and wellbeing.” (Mitchell, 1994)

Independently, the same concept and term occurred to us at our small, independent, not-for-profit organization in Boise, Idaho, USA. Healthwise was founded in 1976 with a mission to “help people make better health decisions.” Through our self-care guides and our online consumer health information database, we were working to help create a better health care system by helping people make smart and informed health care decisions in partnership with their health care providers.

With the emergence and rapid spread of the World Wide Web in the mid-1990’s, hundreds of health information websites sprung up. It seemed for a time that the Internet could do the job of putting good information into the hands of patients. But the Internet proved that it could be a dangerous place for consumers seeking answers to their health questions. While some of the websites were very good, others offered “information” that was either erroneous or just plain dangerous. Understandably, physicians were skeptical about the utility of web-based information. They complained of patients showing up with files of information about their condition that they had downloaded and wanted to discuss. Doctors, not having the time within the appointment to check the veracity and source of the information, tended to dismiss their patients’ discoveries and, in doing so, furthered the doctor-patient divide.

We realized that the information would be more useful, and the patient included more fully, if the doctor prescribed it. So, in late 2001, we set out to write a book about the role of information in health care: Information Therapy: Prescribed Information as a Reimbursable Medical Service. (Kemper & Mettler, 2002) Our opening salvo was a public call for health care systems and health care professionals to consider evidence-based and decision-focused consumer health information delivered in the process of care (e.g., a doctor’s appointment or a message from a health plan) as “medicine” for their patients:

"Right information" implies health information that is evidence-based, unbiased by commercial interests, expert-reviewed, referenced, current, and decision-focused. We believe that if the information doesn’t help the patient or health care consumer make a better health decision, it doesn’t really help. The “right person” is the person or people directly involved in
Transcripts of a Medical Education in Humanities Module: Selection of Role Plays
[www.igi-global.com/article/transcripts-medical-education-humanities-module/70226?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/transcripts-medical-education-humanities-module/70226?camid=4v1a)

Managing Paramedic Knowledge for Treatment of Acute Myocardial Infarction
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/managing-paramedic-knowledge-treatment-acute/13019?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/managing-paramedic-knowledge-treatment-acute/13019?camid=4v1a)