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Accessing your health with a touch of a button

Two docs have a great app

By *Triche Guenin*



On a recent business trip to Boston, I awoke feeling ill and wondered:

- Based on the symptoms, what is the possible cause?
- Are these symptoms normal or should I expect something else?
- Should I go to a doctor? Who's the best doctor to see?
- And if so, where? Is it serious enough to go to the Emergency Department(ED) or should I go to a local clinic?
- Where's the closest facility?
- Can I pre-register before I get there? How long will I have to wait? Do I have to make an appointment?
- Will they accept my insurance? How much will it cost?
- ...

Does this sound familiar....possibly even in a hometown environment? Now, all that information is available at the touch of a finger! Two local emergency doctors, Dr. Wayne Guerra and Dr. Pete Hudson, used their expertise to develop an iPhone application that essentially reduces the struggle when making complicated decisions with limited information. Had I known that this information was not only available but so easily accessible, I could have saved a lot of time, money, and anxiety.

Currently, employers are shifting more of the burden of health insurance expenses to their employees. As a result, these employees are picking up a larger portion of the tab for their healthcare. They are going through sticker shock and finding it financially necessary to shop around. iTriage is a terrific solution to help patients make healthcare decisions more easily.

According to Colorado Public Radio, Colorado spends \$50 million a year on ED care for Medicaid patients. A quarter of those visits could be handled cheaper someplace else. And in the Spring 2010 Excellus report, figures showed that more than 40 percent of ED visits were unnecessary in New York. iTriage can help prevent those unnecessary visits, thus saving money, and keeping the ED open for those who have true emergencies.

Whether one is in the role of patient or healthcare professional, having quick access to information focused on symptoms, disease, procedures, or providers can save time, energy, anxiety, money. Conversely, not having quick access to pertinent information could allow physical conditions to worsen or even result in loss of life! The following quotes provide insight into experiences of those having already used this service:

Potential Patients

- "...searched for the shortest wait time....able to direct the EMTs there."
- "...with a finger tap called the facility to confirm that they were open and that I could stop in without an appointment..."
- "...not happy with surgeon recommended....educated ourselves on procedure and located another surgeon..."
- "...list of symptoms that I was experiencing so I could know a little more about what I was dealing with...."
- "...recently moved to the city.....able to see reviews and choose the best doctor for me..."
- "...gave me the closest retail clinic....as well as hours, approximate charges, and even some insurance information....turn-by-turn directions and on my way back to work in 20 minutes..."
- "...invaluable for busy moms who need to figure what is going on medically with their kids....hate to go the pediatrician all the time"
- "...ease of use in finding a symptom...so can go to their personal physician with some knowledge..."

Healthcare Workers

- "...able to locate a nearby specialist to refer my patients to..."
- "...as pre-nursing student....organized a substantially large amount of content that was presented simply and logically..."
- "...as an EMT...help with difficult to diagnose cases in the field..."
- "...although established for humans it works great in veterinary medicine..."
- "...as an ED RN, lean toward directions I wasn't previously considering when triaging a patient..."

Drs. Guerra and Hudson first introduced iTriage to the market in March 2009. It is available (free of charge) to all who have access to smartphones and/or computers. Interested parties can download the application or use the website www.iTriageHealth.com.

As the healthcare industry grapples with the concept and timing of implementing and integrating its systems into a national Electronic Medical Record program, individual consumers can now personalize their own Electronic Health Records and personally access them with the push of a button.

Based on the changing demographics (e.g. employers reducing healthcare coverage, increased number of elders covered under Medicare, additional individuals' access to Medicaid) and considering the increasing population of smartphone users making less than \$25,000/year, the look of healthcare delivery is destined to change.

Having the most current information to address healthcare issues (such as those dealing with "if, when, where, how, who, what, and how much" related questions) puts the onus of healthcare accountability on the individual. Tools such as iTriage may just be the interim answer we are looking for - to help individuals take responsibility, and therefore control of, their own health.

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