

What If Innovation Could Actually

By Dr. Annette Bosworth

Patients say my profession stopped connecting with them. Even face-to-face doctors seem detached, and people have lost hope that medicine will ever be relational again. What if I told you there is a process that makes health care more patient-centered without increasing costs?

As the first South Dakota physician to meet the Meaningful Use standards for Electronic Health Records (EHRs), I'm in a position to mentor other doctors who want to improve relational medicine using technology. Because I'm technically savvy, I'm able to learn new software and adapt existing programs to my patients' needs.

The technology used to create an online Patient Information Portal for my patients can be adapted for other medical practices. And

it should be...because it's what patients want. At the White House, they're very committed to the inspiring work of changing health care delivery. On a patient level, people are lobbying for this kind of personalized care.

Suppose your doctor adopted the Health IT approach. How would you benefit?

There would be more information flowing both ways. The process begins with an extensive electronic question-and-answer process filled with questions designed to initiate a doctor-patient dialog. In the office, you and your doctor can discuss your answers and more. This thorough effort identifies not only the right diagnosis but the best therapy. Patients who participate in their own health care reap real advantages.

"From the first time I met Dr. Annette Bosworth, it was evident to me that she is passionate about her patients' well-being and also health information technology. I recognized her desire to combine the two and create a health-care environment that optimizes the use of technology to better serve patients and improve quality. She is in the vanguard for Meaningful Use."

—Holly Arends, Regional Extension
Center for South Dakota

Make Medicine Personal Again?

EHRs grow out of the online questionnaires and in-office conversations. Those notes are seamlessly transmittable to specialists, to hospitals, to whoever will eventually participate in delivering care. That information upload streamlines referrals and cuts health care costs.

Holly Arends runs the Regional Extension Center for South Dakota tasked with assisting physicians who want to become Meaningful Users of health information technology.

When a practice decides to adopt electronic health records, Holly says the doctor and everyone who works in that office will make a substantial, though not insurmountable, time commitment. “This type of organizational

project impacts all workflows at the practice. Preparation and planning are essential to a successful implementation and adoption. A short interval of downtime is expected, but should not be a sustained event.”

Using the Meaningful Medicine Patient Information Portal, patients have their doctor’s ear outside the office and well beyond office hours. It’s a superior way to get a timely answer to a pressing question. For example, “What happens if Mom forgot to take her prescription?”

A meaningful use physician harnesses 21st century tools to deliver care with one potential side-effect: this could make doctor-patient relationships personal again.

