

## Use 'Information Prescriptions' to Improve DM Outcomes

The use of targeted "information prescriptions" can enhance the success of disease management (DM) programs, a team of healthcare strategists suggest in a new white paper that urges adoption of a new way to manage chronic diseases.

"Successful disease management across broad populations depends on adopting a new healthcare model," says Joshua Seidman, executive director of the Center for Information Therapy (CIT). "At the model's foundation is the delivery of information prescriptions to support personalized health decisions."

Information prescriptions form the structure of a novel technique Seidman calls "information therapy," or Ix. He defines it as the timely prescription and availability of evidence-based health information to meet individuals' specific needs and support sound decision making. "Unlike free-floating health content on the Internet, information therapy is delivered to people right before or after a doctor visit, test, or surgery, when they receive medicine or at any other specific moment in care," Seidman explains. "A growing body of research shows that one of the most influential aspects of chronic care management is the degree to which consumers use targeted health information to manage their conditions."

Paul Wallace, M.D., executive director of the Kaiser Permanente Care Management Institute, co-authored the white paper, "Improving Population Care and Disease Management Using Ix Principles," with Seidman. In it, the healthcare strategists detail the new care model to show healthcare providers and systems how the information therapy strategy better supports patients' self-care and decision-making needs. In

the paper, Seidman and Wallace show how information therapy in DM balances the needs for mass production and customized information for individuals. The authors contend that, ultimately, the new model better balances three levels of care -- self-care support, care management and unavoidable sick care.

Seidman and Wallace say research on aspects of the model has shown that it improves consumers' health while helping them use resources more efficiently for longer periods of time. "The current healthcare system is largely designed to deliver sick care in doctor's offices and hospitals," Wallace explains. "There is a huge opportunity to use targeted information prescriptions to support physicians and patients in achieving better sick care, to facilitate improved 'upstream' preventive and self-care by patients themselves, as well as to enhance care delivered by health coaches and care managers."

Appropriately prescribed and easily accessible "over-the-counter" patient-oriented Ix also responds to the growing recognition that a spectrum of care needs to exist throughout any given population, Seidman adds. "Today's low utilizers of healthcare services may become tomorrow's high utilizers if their current needs are not effectively addressed through expansive but personalized health information that helps them better manage their health," he says.

To promote the use of information therapy in DM, CIT recently created a new membership program called IxAction, which will seek to establish a network of healthcare leaders dedicated to engaging consumers with the prescription of targeted, useful medical information. "IxAction members will work to

advance the art and science of prescribing information to ultimately improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery," Seidman tells *DM News*.

Early members include "Ix implementers," such as Aetna, Group Health Cooperative, Humana and Kaiser Permanente's Care Management Institute, and "Ix solutions partners," such as Health Dialog, Healthwise and WebMD.

IxAction members will focus on four key areas of work, according to Seidman:

- Research -- Advancing an Ix research agenda and building an Ix evidence base.
- Communications -- Publishing a comprehensive series of Ix white papers, disseminating resources to professionals and consumers through its partners' web sites, promoting best practices through user groups, member-specific publications, and conferences.

- Policy -- Developing standards for consumer health content and Internet quality and advocating for the consumer aspects of information technology policy issues.

- Underserved populations -- Strategizing on how to improve Ix interventions across a spectrum of populations and to ensure that Ix benefits reach underserved populations.

IxAction members recently announced their fourth annual information therapy conference, to be held in September 2005.

The CIT white paper on information therapy and information on the IxAction membership program's 2005 conference are available on CIT's web site, [informationtherapy.org](http://informationtherapy.org).

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