

Telemedicine HiTech-Doctors

Pioneers:



We introduced readers to **HiTech-Doctors** several years ago before the telemedicine boom really hit. Today, many physicians are thinking seriously about telemedicine and how adding it to their practices could meet patient demand for convenience and ease overcrowded schedules. We decided to catch up with Philip Gideon, MD, cardiologist and Chief Medical Officer of HiTech-Doctors and see what's new.

Mary Pat: Describe HiTech-Doctors.

Dr. Gideon: HiTech-Doctors is a web-based health care portal created to open Internet communications between provider and patient. We seek to create the safest and easiest environment for videoconferencing encounters, electronic messaging, clinical data entry, data transfer, and clinical education. Connected care is the future and is here.

Mary Pat: How can a practice improve patient communication

using HiTech-Doctors?

Dr. Gideon: We have a high definition videoconferencing service with quality and utilities not yet seen in this industry.

- We have developed an email service that allows safe communication with your patients.
- For each encounter a history and physical document is generated. This data can be used in the normal workflow of generating the electronic patient chart.
- There is a patient data entry service that allows general clinical data to be populated by the patient.
- Interactive encounter scheduling is available to make life easier for the patient and the provider.
- Other providers and family members can be invited into the video encounter.
- The patients can transmit their health information in to their chart.

Mary Pat: How has HiTech-Doctors evolved?

Dr. Gideon: We wanted to create the next generation of electronic health record. An EHR is needed that allows the provider and patient to communicate and learn through multiple technologies in a safe easy way. We have begun to accomplish this “open chart” with our current system platform.

Additionally, the platform needed to aid providers in meeting Meaningful Use (MU) criteria for participation in government incentive programs. MU2, and particularly MU3 criteria, have some specific technological requirements that cannot at this time be fully met by most available EHR providers. We have been able to meet many of these criteria by:

- Demographic recording and record of smoking status
- Patient-generated data entry (medication reconciliation,

- BP, heart rates, blood sugars, weights, BMI, etc.)
- Use of secure electronic messaging to communicate with patients
 - Allowing immediate ability for patients to view and download their encounter record by both document and video format.
 - Increasing after hours provider accessibility
 - Gives ability to provide summary of care record electronically

There are so many useful aspects to the platform. We believe that as MU criteria evolve and the repealed SGR mandates develop, our product will lead in the industry. We believe that, but we know HiTech-Doctors will lead in health care communication.

Mary Pat: What does it cost physicians and patients?

Dr. Gideon: For the provider, it is \$300 for lifetime enrollment. No additional charge for individual providers.

The communications platform (secure electronic messaging or emailing) is \$300 per month per practice.

For the patient, it is \$20 lifetime enrollment for an individual and this includes family.

\$10 will be added to the patient bill in all encounters as payment for the service to HiTech-Doctors.

Mary Pat: Does insurance pay for telemedicine?

Dr. Gideon: Provider practices are encouraged to notify private insurance providers of the intent to see their patients by telemedicine. The intent should state that the encounter would be billed at an appropriate level of office

visit using a QT modifier. The patient would be billed a set amount which should be considered a copay or as part of the total reimbursement. A description of the service being used (HiTech-Doctors) and the cost of service should be included. Some insurance carriers may need to negotiate the fee schedule, but this is commonplace when a new service is offered in a practice.

Encounters can alternatively be billed by the provider as cash or fee-for-service. This is specifically true for Medicare and Medicaid patients using the system outside of Medicare/Medicaid telemedicine criteria (cms.gov).

Either means of payment require a credit card transaction prior to starting the encounter.

Mary Pat: How does a practice implement telemedicine?

Dr. Gideon: The Hitech-Doctors team has put together an implementation plan to accommodate any office or medical center.

1. Setting up computers, tablets and phones to accommodate the best virtual experience.
2. Modification of patient scheduling workflow to allow a choice of in office or online encounters.
3. Acquire and categorize patient email contact list.
4. Email, postal, and in office advertisement of the new online service.

The implementation involves strategic scheduled learning teams early in the initiation. Both in-person and online availability of the HiTech-Doctors team is present as the roll out takes place and after. This combination of staff and provider education, hardware setup, advertisement, and ongoing technical and clinical support offers the best success.

Mary Pat: Is there technical support?

Dr. Gideon: Yes, 24/7 technical and user support are available buy phone at 1-480-588-2512. Try it!

Mary Pat: Since we last talked, the national conversation about telemedicine has changed radically. How has the conversation changed HiTech-Doctors?

Dr. Gideon: HiTech-Doctors has continued to promote the use of telemedicine as another form of patient:provider communication. Many levels of acceptance and regulation of video encounters need to be in place to allow broad use of telemedicine. This is the conversation at present, and it will need to continue. HiTech-Doctors hopes to help keep the momentum in the right direction towards sustaining the patient doctor relationship.

Mary Pat: What do you think about the interstate telehealth licensing compact?

Dr. Gideon: The compact addresses serious questions about healthcare, such as physician shortage in both rural and urban regions and poor access to care. Telemedicine stands to be an efficient tool in the solution.

There are tremendous benefits to having interstate licensure. Electronic visits are already a proven means of healthcare communication that can be gap-filling technology where there is poor access to healthcare. The compact has had progressively more backing by states and congressional leaders. Allowing providers to have interstate license gives the ability to optimize the use of the available technology.

Recently UHC announced it would cover telemedicine services for its subscribers, however, only if the services were procured through specific telemedicine intermediaries. What are your thoughts about this development?

Insurance providers are at a stage where they need to, and can, set the physician fee schedules for telemedicine given no specific value or code has been yet assigned by CMS. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona recently also consented to paying for telemedicine at only 80% of the billed visit. United Healthcare doing business with only specific telemedicine companies is a normal practice of insurance providers in this current time of managed healthcare. HiTech-doctors offers a platform that allows real medical practice to occur. It is far more than triage to keep insurance company clients out of the ER or urgent care. The real winner is the telemedicine service that allows confident and safe communication.

Mary Pat: What is in the future for HiTech-Doctors?

Dr. Gideon: We are excited to move with the growing pains of our healthcare system so that we stay connected to actual need. Technology through HiTech-Doctors will continue to help in producing the best health outcomes at a low cost. The other side of the HiTech-Doctors healthcare portal is better outcomes and living.

More information on HiTech Doctors is available at their website **here** or by calling 480-588-2512.

