



Bringing Electronic Health Records (EHR) to LA's Working Poor

WHEN MEDICAL RECORDS are accessible electronically, doctors can administer a higher level of quality of care. This is especially true for an indigent population, where people frequently move and have no regular healthcare home.

But implementing a computerized system is not easy. While the technical capacity is readily available, that is only about 10% of the process. Most of the work comes from training doctors, nurses and ancillary staff. It's far easier to scribble a note in a paper file than to look up the patient online, find the proper place to input the information, and type it in to the computer. At the beginning, it definitely takes more time.

The long term benefits though, are worth it. Doctors have a complete record at their fingertips. Pharmacists can see other drugs the patient may be taking. System-wide reminders for preventive tests can be sent to patients quickly and easily.

Most of the hospitals in the US are in some stage of implementing electronic records today.

One of the first community clinics to lead the way and implement EHR is QueensCare Family Clinics with their network of six clinics in central Los Angeles. When it is complete, patients can come to any clinic and their records will be there for them. Eventually, the clinics will be able to integrate with area hospitals for complete continuity of care.

Doctors, nurses and medical technicians are already embracing this new way of working. "My patients are impressed to see this level of sophistication at a clinic," remarked Dr. Guillermo Diaz. "When I can show them computer graphs that show trends in their weight, cholesterol and blood pressure all at once, they become more self-aware of their progress. They ask more questions about what they can do to improve their health. EHR helps us to improve quality of care for each patient."

As a faith-based organization, QueensCare strives to provide, directly and with others, accessible healthcare for the uninsured and low-income individuals and families living in Los Angeles County.



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