

Veterans Affairs Research on Health Information Technologies for Diabetes Self-Management Support

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Abstract

Background:

Like many patients with diabetes, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) patients frequently fall short of self-management goals and experience multiple barriers to self-care. Health information technologies (HITs) may provide the tools that patients need to manage their illness under the direction of their primary care team.

Methods:

We describe several ongoing projects focused on HIT resources for self-management in VA. VA researchers are developing HITs that seek to bolster a variety of potential avenues for self-management support, including patients' relationships with other patients, connections with their informal care networks, and communication with their health care teams.

Results:

Veterans Affairs HIT research projects are developing services that can address the needs of patients with multiple challenges to disease self-care, including multimorbidity, health literacy deficits, and limited treatment access. These services include patient-to-patient interactive voice response (IVR) calling systems, IVR assessments with feedback to informal caregivers, novel information supports for clinical pharmacists based on medication refill data, and enhanced pedometers.

Conclusion:

Large health care systems such as the VA can play a critical role in developing HITs for diabetes self-care. To be truly effective, these efforts should include a continuum of studies: observational research to identify barriers to self-management, developmental studies (e.g., usability testing), efficacy trials, and implementation studies to evaluate utility in real-world settings. VA HIT researchers partner with operations to promote the dissemination of efficacious services, and such relationships will be critical to move HIT innovations into practice.

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Abbreviations: (AIM) Adherence and Intensification of Medications, (HITs) health information technologies, (IVR) interactive voice response, (QUERI) Quality Enhancement Research Initiative, (QUERI-DM) Diabetes QUERI, (VA) Veterans Affairs

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