

[Connected Health for Patients: Information Technologies for Better Care](#)

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In the management of chronic diseases, one of the major advancements had been technologies to track a patient's health indicators. Eighty percent of adults in the United States living with two or more chronic conditions report tracking health indicators such as blood pressure, blood sugar and sleep patterns. Of those who reported tracking their health, 72% felt it had an impact on their health routine (Fox & Duggan, 2013). The need for patient and consumer user health technologies, however, is not limited to “trackers”; patients and providers also seek innovations that facilitate and strengthen the patient-provider relationship and also engage and educate the patient.

GHDonline organized a panel of experts in collaboration with the [2013 Connected Health Symposium](#), as part of the [US Communities Initiative](#). Panelists discussed information technologies (IT) and how they can properly facilitate and enhance patient-centered care, as well as how to measure the impact of these applications.

Key Points

- There are [two main aspects](#) of health IT to consider: those that focus on the patient-provider relationship, and those that allow patients to support their own health.
- The design, testing and implementation of these technologies should include patients from the beginning; no assumptions should be made about what the patient wants or needs but instead these should be identified through pilot testing and collaborative development.
- In order to make infrastructure tools such as electronic health records (EHRs) / electronic medical records (EMRs) successful, a fundamental shift in thinking towards a more patient-centered mindset is required.
 - [Interoperability](#) for EHRs/EMRs is also an important issue that needs discussing—without regulations in place to ensure a standard of communication between systems, a truly patient-centered approach is unlikely because an inclusive view of the patient is not available.
- Technological tools available to patients like smart-phone apps go beyond “tracking” health indicators and attract users for other reasons, like the community and educational aspects they often include.
- The convenience, integration into daily activity, and the perceived benefit of a given technology all facilitate its adoption and use.
 - It is critical that the technologies allow [patients to easily see the value](#) of adopting it as part of their health care experience, especially if they are not technologically savvy.
 - Panelists found patients are more likely to use a technology when providers—specifically their physicians—demonstrate its use and incorporate it into their long-term care.
 - Most patients benefit from seeing an advantageous real-world application of the technology, such as more efficient appointments by completing their health history in advance.
- Barriers for use of health IT include insufficient technological literacy and training among patients and providers, and a lack of physician reimbursement for the use of such technologies
 - Panelists noted that asynchronous digital communication with patients such as emailing may be unrealistic in the current fee-for-service model because providers are not compensated for their time.
- Evaluation of health technologies for patients remains challenging, as potential benefits may be difficult to measure and results may not be immediate.

Key References

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- What facilitators or barriers have you encountered when implementing health IT to support patient-centered care?
- What innovative digital health technologies do you have personal experience with?
- What are some possible [“non-traditional benchmarks”](#) that can be used to demonstrate the value of particular health technologies that support patient-centered care?