



Health & Wellness Monthly Newsletter

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Making healthcare more accessible and medications more affordable: Technology to the rescue

If you find it challenging to understand the convoluted and sometimes conflicting information regarding your healthcare, you're not alone.

Because the U.S. healthcare system is so complex, sometimes it can be a struggle for patients and even doctors to have clear, transparent information about the costs of medications and how they are covered by insurance.

Part of the problem is that doctors have had a near impossible job of knowing the costs of the thousands of drugs they prescribe given the many different insurance plans that cover their patients, with each charging different amounts for these medications. That's been frustrating both for patients trying to take personal and financial ownership of their health, and for the busy doctors trying to help them.

Fortunately, technology has come to the rescue. More than 85 percent of physicians now use electronic health record (EHR) technology, which makes it possible to utilize new tools and digital platforms that provide your doctor drug and plan coverage information right in the exam room, as well as options for lower-cost alternative medications. This helps guarantee that you're getting the right medication at the best price, as well as know in advance if the medication requires prior authorization (PA). This avoids the frustration of going to fill your prescription at the pharmacy only to learn that it's either not covered or needs a PA.

This is just one of the many ways technology is changing healthcare. The availability and popularity of health and wellness tech tools has exploded in recent years, with wearable devices and apps providing personalized health information such as heart rate, blood pressure and sleep patterns, as well as medication, hydration and exercise reminders.

"High-tech tools give doctors transparency into a patient's prescription plan, allowing them to better monitor their patients' conditions and make better treatment decisions, while also enabling patients to be much more knowledgeable about their health and



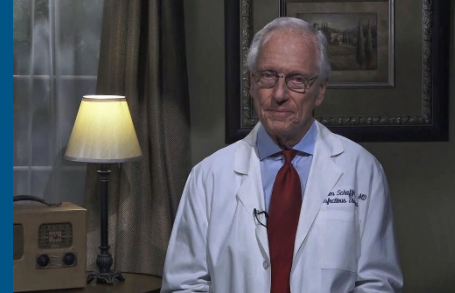
more engaged in what they need to do to stay healthy," said Dr. Lynne Nowak, chief physician experience officer at Express Scripts. "Technology can help make healthcare more of a partnership between the patient and the physician."

Even when physicians are not using the latest technologies, their patients often have access to personalized treatment information right from their smartphones. One such app available through Express Scripts provides individual information so you can learn about the medications you're being prescribed and any existing safety issues, whether you need a prior authorization, what the out-of-pocket costs of the treatment will be, which pharmacies offer the best price and whether there are alternatives or generics available that would cost less. With this information in hand, you can discuss the options with your doctor and leave the office with a prescription you know you'll be able to fill at a price you can afford.

Source: Brandpoint



Did you know influenza complications can include heart attack and stroke? Most people didn't.



Banana Nut Bread

Ingredients:

- 4 ripe bananas
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup almond flour/spelt flour
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 1/4 cup pecans
- 1/4 cup walnuts
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 2 tablespoons ginger powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla powder
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon

Coconut cream:

- 1 can coconut milk (13.5 fl. oz.)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla powder

Directions:

- Purée 3 bananas with a hand mixer. Scoop the bananas into a big bowl.
- Chop nuts coarsely. Now add all other ingredients and mix thoroughly.
- Pour batter into greased pan. Cut the fourth banana lengthwise in half and place the slices on top of the batter.
- Bake loaf for about 45 minutes in oven.
- The night before, put the coconut milk in the fridge (to separate fluid from cream). Scoop only the top layer of cream from the can into a big bowl. Add 1 tablespoon of honey and 1 teaspoon of vanilla and mix it until you get a smooth mixture. Serve with the loaf.

During the 2017-2018 influenza (flu) season, nearly 80,000 people died and more than 950,000 people were hospitalized due to flu and flu-related illnesses, and fewer than four in 10 U.S. adults (37.1 percent) were vaccinated against flu, fewer than in previous years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While those who are vaccinated may still get the flu, the vaccine helps prevent serious complications that may result in hospitalization, loss of independence or even death.

It is particularly important for people with certain chronic health conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease to receive an annual flu vaccine, as they are at higher risk for flu-related complications. In fact, 92 percent of those hospitalized for flu during the 2017-2018 season had an underlying medical condition that put them at risk for serious flu-related complications.

There is low awareness of the connection between chronic health conditions and serious flu-related complications. A new survey from the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) revealed that:

* Less than a quarter of U.S. adults recognize that people with heart disease (24 percent) and diabetes (22 percent) are at greater risk for flu-related complications.

* Less than 20 percent of U.S. adults are aware that heart attack (16 percent), worsening of diabetes (16 percent), stroke (13 percent) and disability (10 percent) can occur as potential complications of flu.

The NFID is working with nearly 20 national healthcare organizations to raise awareness of the dangers of flu among U.S. adults with chronic health conditions including heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, and the need for increased flu vaccination rates among at-risk adults.

"It is essential for everyone age six months and older to receive an annual flu vaccine," said NFID Medical Director Dr. William Schaffner. "For people with conditions like heart disease, diabetes or lung disease, it is an important part of managing their condition, like taking a statin, checking their glucose or using an inhaler."

The dangers are real. Research shows that individuals with heart disease are up to ten times more likely to have a heart attack within three days of flu infection and people with diabetes are at six times increased risk of flu-related hospitalization.

"Flu causes inflammation in the body that can result in serious complications," said Dr. Albert Rizzo, chief medical officer, American Lung Association. "For the more than 31 million people living with lung disease such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, the flu can worsen their condition and lead to a loss of lung function."

For more information, visit www.nfid.org/flu-chronic-health-conditions.

Source: Brandpoint

