

HEALTHCARE ENTERPRISE: eDoc4u Offers Doctors and Employers Help to Boost Wellness

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Posted: Monday, August 8, 2011 12:01 pm



Now, more than ever, information technology is critical to the delivery of healthcare, whether the goal is to help physicians more actively engage their patients or help employers maintain a healthy workforce.

A Nashville-based company, eDoc4u, offers products to meet both those objectives. Founded in 1998 and today a division of Conduit Corp., eDoc4u has steadily evolved to meet medicine's changing IT demands, and it's evolving still, according to President Richard J. Smith.

“Many indicators now suggest that healthcare IT tools and processes are at the frontier of saving costs and improving quality. Efficient medical care of the future must have an online component and be highly personalized to each patient's situation and needs, not to replace physicians but to better leverage and allocate their time and attention,” Smith said. “eDoc4u is currently seeing this trend with large employer groups, as well as providers, where utilization rates have increased dramatically and members are engaged in online preventive-care programs to improve their health.”

In fact, eDoc4u's two primary markets are very large employers (usually with 100,000 employees or more) and providers. eDoc4u offers them a variety of Web-based tools to manage a host of wellness initiatives.

The Employer Market

When a company has, say, 150,000 employees, keeping those workers well represents a dramatic cost savings. That's why more and more employer groups are contracting with disease management corporations. Some of those firms, in turn, contract with eDoc4u for the preventive care component of the strategy.

“Whereas our strategic partner may provide disease management services and telephonic support with health coaches, they use us and they brand our product to deliver a wellness component as a Web-based solution,” Smith explained. Those preventive care services start with a health-risk assessment, the first action taken by employees when they register. Also available to employees via eDoc4u are a personal dashboard with their health status summary; My Health Minder, which details disease risks and offers recommendations, video counseling and other

communications; My Health Lessons for individualized online education; and a personal health record to store and share health info.

Smith explained that if eDoc4u's disease management partner conducts on-site screenings, the data are imported directly into each employee's record. "So, when members log in, all of their lab tests, biometrics and prescriptions histories, for instance, are available, so they're kind of surprised," he said.

What employees see and receive from eDoc4u's products differs dramatically depending on the employer. "The employer has a lot of say over what they want the employee to experience," he said. "Our health-risk assessment is totally customizable, down to the question and sub-question. We have literally hundreds of question sets, and our partners can pick and choose what they want to include."

Health recommendations can change based on an employer's preferences, too. For example, evidence-based guidelines recommend a first mammogram between the ages of 35 and 40. "There's a big difference in a large group if you change that to 40 versus 35. That's less conservative, but it saves them a lot of money," Smith said. "You don't bend the rules, but some of these evidence-based practices have a range."

For the employers themselves, eDoc4u generates aggregate evaluations on their employees' health, thus helping to identify areas that need improvement.

The Provider Market

A newer client group is providers, who can use several eDoc4u products similar or identical to the employee products to serve their patients. "We integrate our physician/patient portal with their electronic health record," Smith said. "We're helping them today to be more productive with their patients and to give their patients more than just that 10-minute window, but to give them a program that's 24/7." Physicians may craft individual care plans for patients, then direct patients to their branded site for recommendations to follow.

Smith described eDoc4u as an "automated patient-centered medical home" that allows physicians extended patient interaction. Doctors can say, "I'll be tracking your progress!" and mean it. Also, it provides physicians with measureable, reportable results in today's world of pay-for-performance and accountable care.

"What we're providing ... and this is fairly new for us ... is a solution for the physicians that helps them get to meaningful use," Smith explained. Packaged for providers is what's called a Quality Scorecard, which offers 44 meaningful-use reporting metrics. Physicians, for example, may log on to their dashboard, select a disease registry such as diabetes and easily identify patients whose cases need better management – and whose failure to follow health recommendations is pushing the physicians out of compliance and lowering their score.

Watch a Little TV

One of eDoc4u's unique offerings is a library of online physician video consultations available to members via a click. The library was developed in conjunction with Meharry Medical College and on contract with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "We have hundreds of them, and they're ethnically sensitive. If you're an African-American female and there's a recommendation for a mammogram, then an African-American female physician presents that recommendation," Smith said.

It's no wonder that eDoc4u is experiencing what Smith called "a major shift in increased utilization of our product." About 25,000 new participants are added to the system each month, and an average of 98 percent of them completes their initial online risk assessment. What's more, Smith said a typical ROI is 3-to-1, "which in anybody's book is a pretty good return on investment."

Diversification of the company's marketplace is the next step. "I think the next big thing is the Medicaid market for us," Smith said.