

Patient and Physician Views on Electronic Chronic Disease Management for Vascular Health

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Background

Chronic Disease management programs using electronic technologies are being implemented in healthcare but little is known about the benefits and preferred use by patients and physicians. The COMPETE III (C3) program developed a Web-based, individualized vascular tracker providing current results, brief advice and best evidence related to 16 key vascular risk variables. The tracker system was shared by patient, physician and a clinical care coordinator (CCC). This sub-study was designed to apply 2 qualitative methods – in-depth individual interviews and structured focus group sessions, to evaluate the benefits and limitations of our electronic vascular risk management program.

Methods

The interviews, by telephone with patients and in-person with physicians, explored the likes, dislikes, benefits and suggested improvements to the program. Focus group sessions, all in person, explored similar themes plus potential future use of such systems. Both formats used theme saturation to define sample size.

Results

Similar themes emerged from both methods (n = 41 patients, 33 physicians). Benefits noted repeatedly by physicians included: C3 Vascular tracker displayed organized patient information in one place, patient visits were more focused, the ability to easily share results and their patients felt more empowered. Patients noted an increased sense of responsibility to monitor their health, improved communication with their physicians in reviewing their health status and were encouraged with goal setting. Individual interviews were more able to capture limitations, which were primarily the inability of the technology to fully meet the expectations of both patients and physicians and the additional effort required by physicians to review and act on the additional information provided.

Conclusion

High quality qualitative research is valuable to supplement quantitative results when examining reasons for success or failure and for sustainability