National Library Of Medicine Launches MedlinePlus Connect

The National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical library and a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has formally launched MedlinePlus Connect. This free service allows health organizations and health information technology (HIT) providers to link patient portals and electronic health record systems to MedlinePlus.gov, a source of up-to-date health information for patients, families and healthcare providers. MedlinePlus brings together information from NIH, other federal agencies, and reputable health information providers. MedlinePlus covers a wide range of health conditions and wellness issues to help keep patients informed.

Patients using portals or EHRs that have implemented MedlinePlus Connect can access health information on MedlinePlus that is directly related to their diagnoses, medications and lab tests. To use MedlinePlus Connect, an organization should contact their EHR vendor or work with their in-house technical staff to follow the instructions in the technical documentation. Full details, including an online demonstration, are available at http://medlineplus.gov/connect [1]. MedlinePlus Connect accepts the coding standards already in the organization's system, such as ICD-9-CM, SNOMED CT CORE Problem List Subset, RxNorm, NDC, and LOINC. MedlinePlus Connect only needs to be set up once and NLM regularly maintains the vocabulary mappings and topic links.

Since MedlinePlus Connect helps EHRs identify patient-specific education resources, MedlinePlus Connect may assist eligible health care providers in meeting one of the criteria for meaningful use of certified EHR technology. Health care providers must meet a number of criteria to demonstrate meaningful use in order to qualify for Medicare or Medicaid EHR incentive payments under the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. "One of our core principles is that meaningful use of EHRs should help patients get access to information that is meaningful and useful to them," noted Farzad Mostashari, M.D., Sc.M., national coordinator for health IT. "This meaningful use objective helps patients obtain information tailored to their health situation, and this free service helps providers do this efficiently." The Institute for Family Health, a federally qualified health center network that operates 26 practices in New York State, first piloted MedlinePlus Connect in 2010. In 2002, the Institute became the first health center network in New York to have an EHR and practice management system. The initial MedlinePlus Connect pilot, supported by the Institute's patient health information portal, was quickly followed by pilots at other healthcare organizations using a variety of EHR and patient portal systems. MedlinePlus Connect can now serve any heath IT system that uses the HL7 Infobutton Standard.

Addition facts include:

- MedlinePlus Connect is free and does not require registration.
- You can link your certified EHR to MedlinePlus Connect to help you achieve one of the 10 menu set criteria for Meaningful Use of certified EHR technology.
- MedlinePlus Connect does not have to be used exclusively to link to patient education information. Many EHR systems can be configured to link to more than one source of consumer health information.
- You only need to implement MedlinePlus Connect once for the whole system and individual links do not need to be created.
- MedlinePlus Connect is not a replacement for MedlinePlus. It is a value-added service to bring MedlinePlus content to EHR systems and patient portals.

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Links:
[1] http://medlineplus.gov/connect