



November 17, 2009 - Topic: Chronic Disease Care

## New Monitoring Tools Help Improve Chronic Disease Management

Remote patient monitoring tools are gaining increased attention as a strategy to lower health care costs and improve chronic disease care, *Kaiser Health News/Washington Post* reports.

Seniors and people with chronic conditions sometimes end up in hospital emergency departments if they forget to take their medications or if their condition is not properly monitored. In some cases, patients must move to nursing homes or assisted living facilities to receive continuous care.

In response to these challenges, home health care providers and others are launching new pilot programs to determine whether remote monitoring technology can help patients track their conditions at home.

Such devices allow patients to take readings of their blood pressure, blood sugar, weight and other measures. The home monitoring tools then transmit this information to physicians, who check the data for any abnormal indications.

The devices have received recent attention from technology companies such as General Electric and Intel. Last spring, the two companies announced a \$250 million joint investment to develop wireless tools that connect patients and physicians.

### Challenges

Despite the promises of remote patient monitoring tools, several obstacles are preventing the devices from becoming more mainstream.

For example, Medicare and private insurers typically do not provide reimbursements for home monitoring tools, which can be quite expensive. Health plans also tend not to reimburse physicians for treating patients remotely.

In addition, some patient advocates have expressed concern that health care providers might use remote monitoring as a substitute for direct medical care (Olson, *Kaiser Health News/Washington Post*, 11/17).

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