

Health Risk Assessments and Health Coaching: How the Web and Consumer's Expectations are Changing the Landscape

PATRICIA DONOVAN: This is Patricia Donovan from the Healthcare Intelligence Network. Today I am speaking with Allyson Faist, the president and CEO of MEDeCoach. Allyson is presenting at HIN's audio conference, on "Health Risk Assessments and Health Coaching: How the Web and Consumer's Expectations are Changing the Landscape." Thanks for joining me today Allyson.

ALLYSON FAIST, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF MEDECOACH: Thank you.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: To begin with, you've said that today's health care consumer has a shortened attention span. When using a multipronged approach with a client for example, emails combined with live coaching, how do you determine the appropriate number of contacts to engage the client without annoying or alienating them.

ALLYSON FAIST: Our experience shows that twice a week, excluding Mondays and Fridays, is the right frequency to deliver coaching. Your education needs to be customized specific and relevant to the individual. Reminders or non-customized materials may be once a quarter, but pushed education must be bite sized, customized and specific to the user. We've found our experience shows about 78% of our users will open their email every time because it's specific to them. When you use push technology that means pushing emails and education to users. You do this through a rule system, which allows participants to receive the education without having to go to a site. We've all found websites that we've spent a great deal of time on. We may even book mark them, but we never go back. People are busy and overwhelmed with life. Your product has to be convenient, easy and relevant to each individual. One size doesn't fit all.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: Thanks Allyson. Now with the multitude of self help and social networking sites that are popping up on the Internet how can a health coach address potentially incorrect or alarming information that a client has obtained via the Internet?

ALLYSON FAIST: We haven't found that there's too much erroneous information regarding health improvement. More often you're going to find contradictory information. Erroneous information is usually associated with symptoms or disease. So rarely do coaches find individuals who have found web content regarding their health that was erroneous. However, the exception might be diets and quick weight loss. More frequently the coaching deals with myths or beliefs that the individual has that impedes their health improvement. So the goal would be to change a belief and you'll change a behavior.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: Thank you. Let's talk for a minute now about information technology in health coaching. What are the key features of a coach management tool and what kind of data mining opportunities might it provide? Can it provide any feedback on a coach's performance for example?

ALLYSON FAIST: The goal of any coach management tool is really to provide efficiency, security and measurement. You want to provide the coach with tools that automatically capture data so the coach can spend more time coaching than documentation. Then the coach is able to manage more participants. We found that having the user and the coach on the same platform is essential. This allows the system to track everything and instantly build reports. So secure messaging, user feedback loops, tracking, participation, usage, user history, the coach's time, all this provides the coach with enough information to deliver excellent communication. That's really what coaching is. Coaching is a collaborative process between the coach and the participant. To be effective we've got to move away from prescriptive coaching, which is used in health care. Performing prescriptive coaching

has not been successful in health care. Data mining isn't difficult when you have an integrated platform that's capturing the user and the coach does on the same system. The key ingredient to good data is to ensure that you're capturing the data you want upfront. Review data collected and if you don't have something to help an individual don't ask it.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: That's some good advice Allyson, thank you. Finally, a recent study found that some health care providers apply HIPPPAA regulations a little overzealously and sometimes that leaves the family members, caretakers and public health and law enforcement authorities a little frustrated in their efforts to get information. What kind of training in HIPPPAA confidentiality should a health coach receive and does the type of coaching medium such as email versus telephonic drive the coach training they should receive in this area?

ALLYSON FAIST: Well if you have a good coaching system, the system is going to provide HIPPA automatically for you. In other words, the coaching system can provide an audit trail of the coach's activity. Customers who use MEDecoach and provide coaching, they can build their own metrics to measure performance from their reports. The HIPPPAA rules are already part of a system. So they can automatically be enforced through message notification, audit trail, limited coach access, meaning coaches only have access to participants that they're assigned to coach, and having aggregate reports available to a sponsoring organization that they can review live that has a data roll up really helps with alleviating the need or the desire to have more information. Reports can capture usage, stratify risk, review assessment, all of the reporting for the sponsoring organization can be delivered by group or total population. Remember then when it comes to email HIPPPAA rules are you really don't want messaging actually traveling across the Internet. What you do is you use a message notification where you notify the user that they have a message from the coach and they click through back

into the server, to receive a message. Therefore nothing is really traveling or is unsafe over the Internet.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: I see. So that ties in with what you said earlier about the email messaging that the notification that you send then they're directed to the site to get the information?

ALLYSON FAIST: Exactly, make it easy for them to just click on a link and then it's the onus of security is based on your hosting facility of being able to keep your server safe. And of course that's pretty standard today.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: Thank you Allyson. Those are all the questions that I have today. I wanted to thank you for being with us. And we look forward to hearing more from you during the audio conference.

ALLYSON FAIST: Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

PATRICIA DONOVAN: To register or get more information about this conference, please call 1-888-446-3530. This is Patricia Donovan for the Healthcare Intelligence Network.