

FIXING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: From better information, better care.

The information revolution has been a long time coming to health care. Now that it's here, it can play a major role in improving the quality and safety of our health care while helping to control costs.

As a doctor who loves computers along with medicine, I'm excited about the potential of technology. I work in a field called *biomedical informatics* – or in other words, the science of using information to improve health care outcomes.

Of course, the technology is just a means to an end. We use it to manage health information, eliminate errors, and empower patients and providers. Electronic health records, like the ones we use at OHSU, give patients access to their own medical information so they can more effectively make decisions about their care.

Electronic records can also help head off unnecessary procedures. The National Coordinator for Health IT estimated that

one in seven hospitalizations occurred due to inadequate information about the patients, information that could have kept patients out of the hospital.

Electronic records also save money because they allow physicians to see more quickly what other tests have been performed, eliminating duplication. Technology also helps us track which procedures work best under which conditions, improving the quality of care. OHSU is a national leader in these areas.

President Obama's emphasis on electronic health records in his economic recovery plan is advancing this effort to improve our nation's health system. That's a plus for everyone. Because when we can empower patients and reward providers for doing things well, the goal of an effective and efficient health system is within reach.



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Tenth in a series.
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