

HealthSpace

www.healthspace.nhs.uk

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The screenshot shows the HealthSpace website interface. At the top left, it says "HealthSpace" and "Please log in or register." The top right has the NHS logo and navigation links: "Settings | Search | Sitemap | Accessibility | Feedback | Help". Below the header, it says "You are here: HealthSpace » Home". On the left, there is a navigation menu with links: "Home", "Register", "How to Register", "Forgotten Details", "Choose and Book", and "Release Statement". Below the menu, there is a "Book your appointment using choose and book" section with a calendar showing "mon 8" and "tue 9". The main content area is titled "Welcome to HealthSpace" and contains a "Login - existing users" section with fields for "User ID" and "Password", and a "Log in" button. Below the login fields are links for "Forgotten your User ID?", "Forgotten your password?", and "Resend your activation email?". To the right of the login section is a "Forgotten your login details?" section with text explaining how to retrieve login details and how to book an appointment. Below the login section is a "General HealthSpace Announcements" section with a sub-heading "Viewing your Summary Care Record using HealthSpace". This section contains text about the Summary Care Record (SCR) and links for "Register - create a new account", "Forgotten user ID", "Forgotten user ID and password", and "Forgotten password". On the right side of the main content area, there are two sidebars: "About HealthSpace" and "Online bookings". The "About HealthSpace" sidebar contains text about the service and a "How to Register" link. The "Online bookings" sidebar contains text about booking appointments and a note about booking reference numbers and passwords.

Description

HealthSpace is a secure online personal health organiser, or Personal Health Record (PHR), that is available to anyone over the age of 16 and living in England. The service is a nationally-funded component of the £12.4 billion NHS National Programme for IT (NPFIT). Though funding has been very limited, HealthSpace has the potential to become the most important and revolutionary part of the NPFIT programme.

The function of HealthSpace is twofold: to operate as a platform for the public to maintain a personal record of health and well-being information; and to enable patients to view their Summary Care Record (SCR) where possible. The SCR is the national database of patient records providing a summary of the clinical information held on individual's GP record. Crucially HealthSpace provides patients with a view of their live GP record; it is not a separate record running parallel to the main clinical record.

The HealthSpace portal already provides patients with the ability to access the national NHS appointment booking service Choose and Book, and will over time have additional transactional services, including electronic prescriptions. From spring 2008 HealthSpace is being offered through the national NHS Choices portal.

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At present HealthSpace is undergoing early rollout and evaluation as part of the NHS SCR Early Adopter Programme, where patients in a number of pilot areas of England, who are registered with a GP in this programme, can register to view their SCR through the HealthSpace portal.

The goal of this programme is to mobilise the data held in the patient record. Namely, patients will have the option to permit doctors' access to their SCR where other records are unavailable, especially for those individuals who require medical help abroad. The ability to access one's SCR has also proved quite useful for patients who must comply with complicated drug regimes. In addition to permitting access, patients can view audit trails, displaying who has accessed their SCR and under what circumstances that access was granted.

Further, Dr Gillian Braunold, clinical director for the Summary Care Record and HealthSpace, intends for the HealthSpace portal to ultimately be used in a more comprehensive fashion, where users can share healthcare plans, view and edit organ donor status, obtain information on terminal care, and provide feedback on personal healthcare experiences within in the NHS.³³

Technology

HealthSpace, as an application to assist users with health and lifestyle management, has been available to the British public since 2003. Version 2.2, which allows users to register for advance accounts, went live in June 2007. Advanced account holders were first able to view the clinical element of their SCR on HealthSpace from October 2007. As the application develops, additional features and improvements to the software will be delivered in release cycles.

Currently only advanced account users can read their record. In the future, however, they will be able to interact with it as well, ensuring both read and write functionalities. From the end of May 2008 these HealthSpace users will be able to view their SCR even if they have denied such access to health service staff. Further developments will enable users to enter personal health data including health plans and treatment preferences. For those willing and able to view their SCR (i.e. advanced account holders), the following features have been enabled: a dedicated news and health information service, a new login process with increased security levels, an enhanced means of displaying the SCR (including clinical summary and demographic details), more descriptive error messages and an advanced help function to aid users during the login and registration process.

In terms of security, a major concern among the British public, Dr Braunold maintains that the highest levels of security have been employed in the user identification process. In fact, security has been further enhanced for those attempting to view the SCR. Three forms of identification are required to verify the user's identity and resident address, which must be identical to that on file with the individual's GP. Once the identity and address are confirmed, advanced HealthSpace users are issued a Secure Login Card. After entering a username and password, users need to answer a series of three challenges generated from the HealthSpace security system that are based on a grid of numbers displayed on the back of the Secure Login Card. In addition, patients' use of the system is carefully monitored.

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Recently, collaborative efforts have stepped-up between HealthSpace and NHS Choices, a national NHS portal that provides health information to assist consumers in making more informed decisions regarding treatments. The aim is to 'synergise' offerings.

Due to its secure platform, HealthSpace intends to become the preferred service where patients keep their health information and care preferences as well as execute transactions within the NHS. Dr Braunold expects that healthcare service providers who require a confidential, secure platform for interacting with patients will also use HealthSpace. It is intended that NHS Choices, when used in conjunction with HealthSpace, will provide patients with health information and advice that is most relevant to their profile. Thus, merging of the two portals will create a 'one stop shop' for patients, where they can access their care records and hospital letters as well as make appointments and order prescriptions.

Business model

The HealthSpace project is entirely funded by the Department of Health (DH) and there are no plans for sponsorship. This e-health 2.0 application aims to explore a 'strategic business case' whereby the key benefits of the system are exploited to improve NHS service delivery and patient satisfaction. By mobilising patient data, the once static record takes on a dynamic characteristic evoking discussion around the patient care delivery model. The rationale of HealthSpace, then, is to offer a secure health portal where the patient can modify permission settings and even facilitate a safe, social networking environment for like-minded patients; thus putting healthcare more firmly in the hands of the patient himself.

By January 2008, more than 150,000 patient records were uploaded to the NHS Spine in Bolton and Bury, areas covered in the Early Adopter Programme. As more SCRs are added to the system, more applications for HealthSpace accounts have been submitted. At the end of January 2008, HealthSpace reported 28,000 account holders and over 350 advanced account holders. These figures include those who may have started the process but not yet activated or proceeded with the rigorous authentication process.

Prognosis

HealthSpace is a national level PHR initiative that has the potential to be a world leader. It begins to lay the foundation for enterprise-wide access to patient information whilst empowering users to take a more proactive role in their healthcare. With the ability to view clinical notes and audit trails, transparency within in the NHS is increased. Such insight into the health system will ensure greater accountability among clinicians. In fact, Dr Braunold says she expects a shift in how clinicians record their notes and communicate via the record as they become aware that such information is readily available for patients to view.

However, it must be said, that the features of this health record service will cater more to those at the enterprise level rather than for personal use. Dr Braunold hinted towards extending the functionality of HealthSpace to include a social networking platform in conjunction with a personal health organiser.

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Given the often slow-moving nature of the NHS on technology projects, it seems likely that many other e-health 2.0 applications that offer a personal health organiser and social feature will have already entered the market, establishing an installed-base ahead of any DH endeavours in this area.

Moreover, a known barrier to the widespread adoption of HealthSpace is security. Though HealthSpace enables patient empowerment, it also brings to the surface frustrations regarding patient privacy and security of NHS data. Dr Braunold asserts that confidentiality is a primary concern for UK patients; however, they are also "increasingly interested in utilising technology to help them through the bureaucracy challenges". This sort of tug-of-war between patient anxiety and motivation to adopt new technologies presents an interesting challenge for the DH.

As previously mentioned, HealthSpace continues to reassure the UK public that strict measures have been put in place to protect against inappropriate access to health and demographic data. Methods have been introduced to investigate and take action against such occurrences.

However, even as the DH attempts to reduce anxiety, reports involving security breaches continue to appear in the media. The loss of data on 22 million UK citizens by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and recent reports of NHS data losses, including the loss of clinical data connected for 168,000 patients, can only dent public confidence.³⁴ If incidents such as these continue to surface, the widespread adoption of HealthSpace may prove an immense challenge.

That said the advantages enjoyed by HealthSpace are enormous. It is an official NHS application and provides a patient view of the data in their GP record, which is generally regarded as the most accurate and best kept holistic clinical record within the healthcare system.

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