Using Data to Build a Culture of Health

Overview

Rapid advances in technology have enabled us to collect large amounts of data that could help us make better decisions about how to improve health. As we work to build a Culture of Health—a nation where everyone has the opportunity to live longer, healthier lives—it will be critical to ensure individuals and communities can effectively use and manage this data in ways that help people get healthy and stay healthy.

About Data for Health

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiative, Data for Health, will explore how we can collect, share and protect health information in ways that are useful to individuals, organizations and communities as they work to improve how well and how long we live.

Key issues we want to understand:

• How are communities using data to improve health?
• What are their hopes, aspirations, and concerns about various forms of health information?
• What new data do they want to access?
• How can we best collaborate on improving health by sharing data among different sectors?
• How must we secure data?

Knowing what challenges people want to solve and what health information they need to help solve these problems will inform efforts to design infrastructure for collecting, sharing and protecting data in ways that work best for communities across the country.

Making Data Meaningful

We are sharing more information about ourselves than ever before but we are still in the dark when it comes to harnessing it in ways that can lead to healthier lives and communities, and help build a Culture of Health.

There are roughly 40,000 health apps and wearable devices on the market today.

BRIDGING HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE IN NYC

In an effort to determine how public health can use EHRs to analyze population health trends, New York City is developing the NYC Macroscope, a population health surveillance system that uses EHRs to track chronic conditions managed by primary care practices.

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Data, along with health information collected through public health surveys, electronic health records, clinical trials, insurance claims and other avenues outside of health can help individuals make better decisions about their health and help communities take effective action to improve health and wellness for their residents.

For example, a city planner with access to information about traffic injuries and bike routes tracked by apps can determine where to install bike lanes and other bicycle safety measures as she works to improve the health of her community. In fact, Oregon’s Department of Transportation is doing just that, using data from Strava to inform bicycle planning in the region.

What’s Next

Data for Health is led by an advisory committee of public health practitioners, physicians, health care researchers, health technology and informatics experts, consumers, and representatives of local government and health care systems. Data for Health is hosting a series of “Learning What Works” events around the country to hear from residents, planners, public health departments, school districts, local businesses, housing and community developers, researchers and scientists about what information is important to them and how they might use it to help people lead healthier lives. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will participate in each of these events. The advisory committee will issue a report and recommendations in early 2015.

Data for Health Advisory Committee

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USING DATA TO BUILD HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

In Buffalo, NY, city departments are working together as part of the Operation Clean Sweep program to improve the most challenged neighborhoods. Using data gathered from 911 calls, population density maps, and more, they are able to pinpoint areas most in need and then allocate and prioritize people and resources to these neighborhoods. Operation Clean Sweep performs tasks like removing litter and debris, sealing vacant houses, providing employment and health care services, and setting up neighborhood watch programs.

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