

Whether it is technology you can or can't see, some of the latest platforms, devices and software rolled out recently will continue to revolutionize ways health care is delivered.

You may have seen commercials for cloud computing in business or use a cloud-based service for personal use. Now health care professionals can do the same in order to share information regardless of which data platform they use. Athena recently unveiled its athenaCoordinator® Enterprise for electronic health record (EHR), practice management, appointment scheduling and care coordination. It offers hospitals and health systems a chance to seamlessly connect across different settings, networks and data systems.

Since it is cloud-based, there is not an upfront capital investment, the need to purchase extra software or replace current technology systems. There is also a patient portal so they can view their clinical information, understand financial responsibility, pre-certify, pre-register and receive reminders.

Do patient portals improve outcomes? There are now empirical results that patient reminders and use of portals can make a difference in health outcomes. In the latest study published in Medical Care, researchers found that diabetic patients who use online patient portals were more likely to regularly take their medication. At the same time, they also improved their cholesterol levels. The study examined data from more than 17,000 patients over a four year period. This model can be applied to other chronic diseases in hopes of increasing compliance.

Another option which may prove beneficial is wearable technologies. Newer models offer the possibility of better connectivity and empowerment in ways not seen before. Some may monitor biometrics like heart rate and respiration. Others detect patient movement as well as send reminders and alerts. Groundbreaking wearables can interact with mobile devices and home monitoring tools. Recently, iPatientCare launched a Google Glass app called "miGlass" to provide real time information and reminders right in front of the patient's eyes. Withings also unveiled its Wireless Blood Pressure Monitor which uses Bluetooth technology and a fashionable design so patients are more likely to use it.

The rapid advances in technology can have a strong impact on patients and the way health care is delivered and monitored. Patient portals, home monitoring and wearable technologies continue to increase in importance under the new performance-based healthcare payment and

care delivery models such as accountable care organizations and patient-centered medical homes.