



June 22, 2015

Submitted via email at chronic_care@finance.senate.gov

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on solutions to improve care for patients with chronic disease. We are committed to ensuring that all patients – including those with chronic medical conditions – have access to their own health information so that they can make informed decisions about their health and health care. We applaud you for your leadership on this important public health issue.

As you may know, Humetrix has developed numerous mobile health applications over the last fifteen years to enable consumers to engage with the world around them in new and innovative ways using their own health care data. One of these applications – iBlueButton – incorporates all existing electronic health record (“EHR”) standards, as well as federal program Blue Button data, and allows patients to easily and securely receive, view, and aggregate clinic and hospital discharge summary records from most 2014 certified EHRs on their mobile devices. With iBlueButton, Medicare beneficiaries, TRICARE enrollees and Veterans can also pull their Blue Button records offered by these federal programs, which can be aggregated by the app with their EHR data. iBlueButton has won multiple industry innovation awards, including three ONC Industry Innovation awards, and is widely viewed as one of the most usable and novel mobile personal health record (“PHR”) applications on the market today.

Humetrix has also created an app called Tensio to help anyone, in partnership with their doctor, effectively manage hypertension – a chronic disease that can cause other serious illnesses such as stroke, heart disease or kidney disease. Using Tensio, patients are able to monitor their blood pressure at home, receive alerts reminding them when to take their medications and when newly prescribed medications may affect their blood pressure, and manage other risk factors, including weight, activity level and sodium intake. Tensio automatically imports medications and medical conditions from the patient summary health records received from a doctor’s EHR to Humetrix’s other mobile app, iBlueButton, puts their information into context with any other home monitoring device data the patient may be tracking, and securely stores the aggregated data on the individual’s smartphone. Additional information about Tensio and Humetrix’s other mobile apps can be found in the attached article from the San Diego Union-Tribune, which profiled the app on June 19, 2015.

In response to Question #7 posed by the Senate Finance Committee, we suggest that the Committee encourage patients with chronic disease to access and use mobile tools to manage their health

and health care. There is a large body of evidence outlining the tremendous benefits patients realize when they have access to their health records.¹ Research shows that these benefits are enhanced when patients have convenient access to their records on a mobile device. According to a 2014 poll conducted by the Pew Research Institute, the majority (64 percent) of American adults now own a smartphone of some kind, up from 35 percent in 2011. Among these, 19 percent lack other broadband service at home, and/or have limited options for going online other than their mobile device.²

Previous polling shows that almost a third (31 percent) of mobile internet users say their device is their primary vehicle for web access (compared to a desktop or laptop computer), either due to preference or because of limited alternative options.³ These findings indicate that the traditional desktop or laptop computers may not meet the needs of all, and signal a growing number of mobile-only users. Along those same lines, they also suggest that patients may be more apt to access their EHRs from their mobile device than through an online portal. Patient mobile access to their EHR is also optimized at the point of care where patients need to be able to share their up to date medical history with their health care providers.

We also believe that Congress should take steps to advance patient-mediated health information exchange as a rapid, near-term solution to interoperability. Patients with chronic disease often see many different providers who likely do not have the ability to exchange records with each other. While some EHRs do also have patient portals, these portals are often not user-friendly and do not allow patients to aggregate information across information sources. As a result, patients have to log in to separate portals for each provider they see – a reality that discourages many patients from using these tools.

Mobile technologies like Humetrix's iBlueButton are a near-term solution to the challenges associated with traditional patient portals, as they allow patients to immediately receive, view, and aggregate their EHR summaries pushed to their app on their mobile devices using DIRECT messaging (meeting the meaningful use "view/download/transmit" requirements) at the point of care. Data aggregation, segmentation and partitioning can take place immediately on the patient's mobile device without requiring multiple steps of logging into multiple portals, and transmitting EHR records to PHR applications. Patients may also be able to log on and input their own health care information, including data coming from self-monitoring devices and which are automatically aggregated on their phones (e.g. with the use of HealthKit in iOS8 mobile devices) potentially contributing new, patient generated and novel information to their record that could be used by providers to deliver more precise care.

¹ For example, a 2013 study from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research, found that patients with full access to their EHRs reported that "seeing their records positively affected communication with providers and the health system, enhanced knowledge of their health and improved self-care, and allowed for greater participation in the quality of their care such as follow-up of abnormal test results or decision-making on when to seek care.

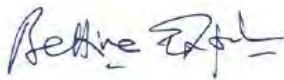
² Pew Research Center, April, 2015, "The Smartphone Difference" Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>

³ Pew Research Center, June, 2012, "Cell Internet Use 2012" Available at: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Cell-Internet-Use-2012.aspx>

In conclusion, we reiterate that we believe that a first step to improving care for patients with chronic disease is giving them the personal health information they need to manage and coordinate their health care across the various health care professionals they may see to treat their conditions. When shared with multiple providers, this information creates a learning health system that supports preventive care and treatment where necessary. Mobile tools are critical to engaging patients and supporting value-based care in our technology-centric world – meeting patients where they are with the information they need when they need it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be a resource to you on this or any other issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bettina Experton".

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