

PICture This

Programs and Policies
Affecting Today's Families

Patients' health information/medical record is the information health care providers (doctors, nurses, therapists, etc.) use to review a patient's health history, plan for future care and treatment, and figure out the services and treatments covered by a patient's insurance.

What is in a health record?

A health record is a collection of an individual's personal health information collected by health care providers. Records are made up of patient's name, contact information, health insurance plan, doctors' notes of visits and treatments, test results, medication records, allergy list, immunization records, recent medical history, consultation notes from other health care providers, reports from any hospital visits or stays, etc.



The health record is the physical property of the health care provider. There is no one place that stores a person's complete record. Health care records for the same person might exist at different health care providers' offices, clinics, and hospitals. Some people take it upon themselves to be their own advocate and keep complete records for themselves.

How do you access your (your child's) health record?

Although records are the property of health care providers, people have the right to look at and obtain copies of their (their child's) records. Providers can charge a reasonable fee for the cost of copying. Check with your state health department for specifics. For some it can be a good idea to have a copy of important parts or even your entire health record. You can:

- share copies of records with new health care providers so they have a clear picture of your (your child's) health history and care.
- provide copies to emergency health care providers when traveling. This is a helpful tip for families of children with special health care needs.
- review bills and information about past health visits and treatments.
- find out what parts of the personal health record have been shared and who has received this information.

What are your rights to your own personal health information?

Congress, through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) developed the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The goal was to protect patient privacy in such a way that it doesn't interfere with patients'

access to quality health care. The regulations took effect in April of 2001. Health providers, health plans, etc. have 2-3 years to comply with this Privacy Rule.

In the past access to and transfer of personal records was determined by a patchwork of state and federal laws. Information could be legally sent, without a person's knowledge or consent, and without relating to the person's medical care (or its reimbursement) to a variety of others such as employers, banks, etc. Today, HIPAA has safeguards to protect the confidentiality of medical information.

The Privacy Rule creates national standards to protect individuals' medical records. It gives patients control over their own health information; sets boundaries on the use and release of health records; establishes safeguards providers and others must use to protect the privacy of information; holds accountable those who violate patient privacy; and finally, creates a balance between individual privacy and the responsibility to protect public health.

The Privacy Rule provides the following rights:

- To see and obtain a copy of your own health record and to request corrections as needed.
- To find out how your health information may be used – who will be likely to see it.
- To find out who has been given copies.



Parents usually have the right to make decisions on behalf of minor children. Under the Privacy Rule, parents have the same rights on behalf of their children's personal health information as those noted above, except in certain circumstances.

DHHS understands that medical information must be shared freely and quickly for treatment, but "minimum standards" are needed so that individuals' privacy is not violated.

For more information about HIPAA or press releases visit www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/

Visit www2.ahima.org/consumer/main.html for a better understanding of personal health records and how to keep and organize copies of complete personal health records ■

Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With a Partners in Information and Communication (PIC) Cooperative Agreement from the MCH Bureau - DHHS, Family Voices is working to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health.

PICture This is a digest of articles and news clips to share with families, family organizations, and our professional partners to offer a flavor of activities going on in the maternal and child health (mch) community. We hope to encourage flourishing partnerships! ■

Partners...

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB)

is a national, professional organization whose goal is to improve the health and safety of mothers, babies, and families through education and collaborative partnerships of public and private organizations. There are 22 state chapters and 68 local chapters. Chapters vary in name. Visit the HMHB web site to find a chapter near you.



HMHB primarily provides the public and families with health information for mothers and children. Past public education campaigns focused on educating mothers on the importance of folic acid and oral health. HMHB also supports a teen program, Girl Neighborhood Project (GNP). GNP is designed to help 9-14 year old girls make responsible and healthy choices that will affect the rest of their lives.

Every two years HMHB organizes a national conference for health care advocates and providers. The conference provides a place to share and learn about strategies to improve the health of mothers and babies. This year's conference scheduled for October 2001 is now postponed until July 22-24, 2002 in Clearwater, FL. Visit www.publichealth.usf.edu/conted/hmh01.html for more information.

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Tidbits for the Month



National Child Health Day October 1, 2001 was National Child Health Day. This year's focus is achieving community-based service systems for children with special health care needs. The National Maternal and Child Health Bureau has developed a promotional packet for family and community leaders. The kit contains posters, fact sheets, and educational activity sheets to help you plan a special local event. This kit can be used to promote better systems of care for children with special health care needs throughout the year. Contact the National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse at (888) 434-4624 to receive your National Child Health Day Kit. ■

Share your news with others!

We're always looking for news and activities about family organization and programs to post. Share exciting events and activities about your organization that will be interesting to others. Email Kathy Cruz at kcruz@fcsn.org or fax at (617) 572-2094 with your tidbits. To subscribe to the newsletter, email or call Kathy at (617) 236-7210 ■

What's new in research?



Art Therapy and Adolescents

Art therapy was found to be a helpful tool to help adolescents talk about feelings on difficult topics. Art therapy is less threatening than "talking" psychotherapy since it allows the adolescent to be in control. Drawings and symbols express emotions an adolescent may find hard to say out loud. See Riley S. 2001. Art therapy with adolescents. *Western Journal of Medicine*. 175(1):54-57. ■

Family Resource Corner

* Baby Safety

Getting down on your hands and knees to get an idea of what your baby sees and can get her hands on or can crawl into is a way to help make your home safe. Contact the National Safe Kids Campaign at (800) 441-1888 or visit www.safekids.org for suggestions on keeping your baby and toddler safe at home or on the road.



* Food Safety

The American Association of Poison Control Centers has a new national, 24 hour toll-free poison control number (800) 222-1222. Call them if someone in your family eats something poisonous. It's also a good idea to have Syrup of Ipecac in your home if you need to make your child throw up. Visit www.poison.org to help you spot poisons in your home to be aware.

* Helping Children and Teens Deal with Crisis

This past month's events have affected everyone including children. Some families might have a hard time helping children and teens understand and cope with these tragic events. The following is a collection of resources families might find helpful:

The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC Clearinghouse) provides resources for parents and educators to help children cope with and discuss these tragic events. Visit www.askeric.org

The National Association for Education of Young Children developed an information sheet to help families provide emotional support for children. Visit www.naeyc.org/coping_with_disaster.htm

The Nemours Center for Children's Health has articles written specifically for families, children, and teens dealing with terrorist attacks. Visit www.kidshealth.org ■



Highlights for the next PICture This...

- Accessing data about health services in your state
- October is Family Health Month

