The Health Care Workforce And The Patient

The November 2013 issue of Health Affairs, “Redesigning the Health Care Workforce,” left out a very important person: the patient. Future changes in health care delivery affected by online applications are likely to give much more control to patients than they now have.

Internet applications have transformed most service industries, from banking to travel, and consumers now do much of what professionals once did. An online platform of communication and care is being used by some progressive delivery systems such as Kaiser Permanente, and patients are being empowered to take the lead in preventive services and chronic illness care. Imagining robust Internet applications and patient access to all necessary information for care, one can see a future of much greater patient self-management. There is already substantial evidence to support the quality of patient-directed care.1-4

All discussions of future health teams should include a role for activated patients in their own care. And the more people are able to do for themselves, the fewer professionals will be needed.

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