

Innovators Rise To Meet Affordable Care Act

Some healthcare providers are finding opportunities in the new law

By Nicole Brochu- Sun Sentinel (source)

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - July 20, 2013 -With its rollout coming in bits and chunks in the next seven years, the Affordable Care Act's mammoth health reforms are sparking apprehension and confusion among patients and medical providers alike.

But where some see consternation, others see opportunity, including a few doctors who have designed websites, mobile applications and other products to deliver efficiencies that will soon be mandated under the new law, also known as "Obamacare."

A Fort Lauderdale radiologist, for example, has created **SecondOpinions.com**, connecting patients with board-certified physicians around the country who can offer expert analysis at the touch of a computer keypad - the kind of standardized quality-assurance technique the Affordable Care Act will eventually require.

"Employers are also using these types of procedures to decrease their health insurance costs," said Dr. Michael Yuz, **SecondOpinions.com**'s founder and CEO. "It's right in line with what Obamacare is trying to do."

Then there's the Palm Beach County internist who helped develop an online medical records network that puts patients' health information on a security-encrypted cloud, and the Boca Raton doctor who helped design a similar e-records system for anesthesiologists via an iPad tablet app.

Federal law currently offers financial incentives to medical providers who use electronic records in a meaningful way, but by 2015, the reform law's changes mean penalties for those who haven't gone to a computerized recordkeeping system.

It's all about making the system more efficient, cost-effective and safer, said U.S. Rep. Patrick Murphy, D-Fla., adding that the best way to do that is to change how medical providers are compensated, from a pay-for-service model to a pay-for-performance standard.

After all, doctors are in the best position to design those improvements since they are on the front lines of the patient delivery system, Murphy and others say.

"I think it's mandatory (that doctors get involved) because physicians have a firsthand grasp of the day-to-day care of patients, and they can best identify improvements and put in place what needs to be done to make the system run more efficiently, " said Michael Angelillo, a North Palm Beach internist and rheumatologist who helped design the Universal Healthcare Network.

The encrypted network, which is still in its infancy and not fully operational, will securely store a client's medical information online for medical providers to access in emergencies and other medical events, at a cost of \$15 a year.

"His idea and others like it, using technology, will help reduce costs, " Murphy said. "The biggest problem facing our fiscal house is the rise in healthcare costs."

Debbie Hornstein, 62, of Cooper City is thankful the healthcare overhaul is inspiring new efficiencies. She credits SecondOpinions.com with giving her a peace of mind she couldn't get from her own doctor.

Three years into remission for lung cancer, Hornstein said a follow-up CT scan showed "two itty-bitsy spots" in the area of her lung. Her oncologist assured her they were nothing to worry about, but she felt a whole lot better about that diagnosis when it was confirmed by a board-certified radiologist she found through Yuz's site.

She used a CD of her scan to upload the image onto her computer, sent it to a doctor recommended by SecondOpinions.com, and "within an hour, I had a very comprehensive report, read by a radiologist, from the comfort of my own home, " Hornstein said, estimating she paid \$68. "If I had gone into a doctor's office, I would have paid a lot more, and you can't always get in. It really put my mind at ease."