

New program helps patients monitor health at home using special technology



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A new program in rural Missouri is helping patients monitor their own health by giving them equipment in their homes to read their blood pressure, heart rate and weight, among other biometrics.

WARRENSBURG, Mo. - A new program in Western Missouri is encouraging people to take control of their health.

The Western MO Healthcare To Go! program is giving patients equipment to use in their homes that can track their biometrics, such as blood pressure, weight and glucose.

“It's really important to have the technology so they can do it consistently in their home and that we have the software to track and monitor,” said Darinda Reberry, Chief Nurse Officer for Missouri Western Medical Center.

The program is a partnership between the Missouri Western Medical Center, Saint Luke's Health Systems and Johnson County (Mo.) Community Health Services. It is made possible through a grant from Verizon Wireless.

Right now, health officials are searching for volunteers to use this technology in their homes and monitor their own health.

“Using technology in the patient's home is very important,” family physician Dr. Stephanie Long said. “Allowing the patient to be engaged in their healthcare gets them involved, lets them take responsibility for their own health.”

Karen Taylor is volunteering for Western MO Healthcare To Go!

“I have a lot of factors that contribute to my heart disease and very strong genetics on my dad's side of the family,” she said. “Plus I was a smoker for about 25 years and just gradually became overweight as time went on so I wanted a program that would help my monitor those things.”

She has a scale in her home and a blood pressure monitor. Both are connected wirelessly to a pod that sends Taylor's information to a website.

Linda Craven is the program's public health enhancement coordinator. She can log onto the website and track the patient's numbers. If anything is out of the ordinary, she provides works with them, coaching them on how to maintain healthy levels.

"It's a lot more convenient to do it in my home," said Taylor. "And they can monitor daily as opposed to waiting months between checkups."

Dr. Long said it's important for patients to take more responsibility and know how their body reacts to things like food and stress.

"I typically see someone twice a year for their diabetes and if they have the technology at home, they can monitor themselves every day, multiple times a day," she said. "And that allows the patient to pick up on problems sooner and hopefully prevent worse things from happening in the long run."

To be eligible for this program, you have to be 50 years of age or older. You must also have a diagnosis of heart disease, diabetes or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Or, you must have one of the following risk factors: BMI > 30, be a smoker, have hypertension or high cholesterol.

To learn more about this program, visit www.WMMC.com or call (660) 262-7425.

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