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# Predictive analytics will be a game changer – eventually



The complexities of healthcare analytics present stakeholders with an array of challenges

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Healthcare analytics has the potential to help identify potential health risks, promote better health and deliver more accurate diagnosis and treatment plans. Of course, analytics is a broad term and can mean different things to different people. In fact, healthcare stakeholders have been performing some kind of healthcare analytics for years, primarily around revenue cycle and claims data. But for the purpose of this discussion, I want to look at predictive analytics, which is the basis for real-time or near real-time clinical decision support.

There are two levels to healthcare predictive analytics. The first involves using factors to determine a patient's propensity for certain health problems. These are the one-to-one or two or three risk factors that may lead to the problem based on lifestyle, ethnicity, family history or health condition. For instance, if a person is a smoker there is strong evidence that they may develop lung cancer or cardiovascular disease. The second level is the kind of analysis that involves hundreds or thousands of patients with similar profiles and health conditions, and which alerts the provider to the likelihood of a patient developing or having a particular health problem.

The challenge here not only comes from incorporating all the other non-identifiable patient data, but also the volume of data that may be required for each patient. Furthermore, at this point, no one really knows which data elements would be the most predictive. There are several factors, from demographics to healthcare condition, each with potentially hundreds of variables, which could be predictive. The computing power to manage this will be tremendous.

That leads to another challenge: the data warehouse. While most healthcare organizations are grappling with implementing EHR solutions, the next step is getting the clinical data from the EHR, the claims data, the operations data and

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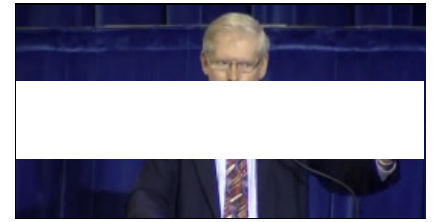
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ambulatory data into one place where it can be analyzed. To some, this may sound easy, but the volume of structured and unstructured data, regularly extracted and loaded will be a huge burden for many. Dan Burton, CEO of Health Catalyst, an analytics service provider, calls it “a level of data on an order or magnitude that most people can’t comprehend.”

This is not to say that predictive analytics for real-time decision support shouldn’t be pursued. Some companies are making progress. George Dealy, vp of Dimensional Insight, a business intelligence provider, notes they are already seeing some progress predicting strokes, congestive heart failure and other health problems through their applications.

In the end, this will not be an overnight transformation; it will take years. Whenever it gets here, though, it will be a game changer which will help us all live longer, healthier lives.



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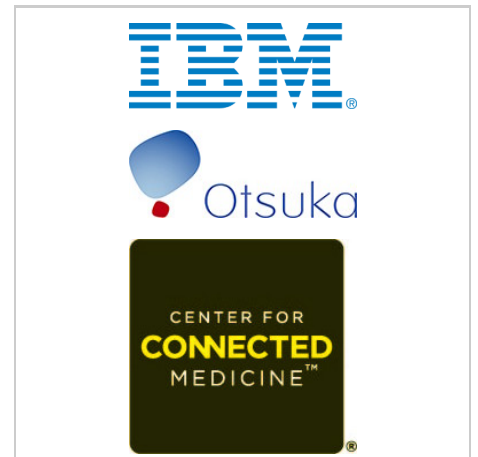
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