

Mobile App Connects Group Health Members to Care

By **Gwen O’Keefe, M.D.**
*Chief Informatics Officer
Group Health*



People use their iPhones to find a Starbucks, fight off Angry Birds, and book flights. Now Group Health members can use their smartphone to better manage their health care needs.

Group Health has launched an iPhone app that does a whole lot more than provide the usual health tips. Those of our more than 660,000 members who use iPhones – and a lot of them do – will have the ability to do everything from review medical records to check how long the wait time is for a prescrip-

tion pick-up. Soon we’ll extend this same capability to Android-based smart phones.

At Group Health, we’ve always believed that the right technology can make health care more effective and affordable. That’s why we were among the first health care providers to give members secure Web-based access to medical records, a step we took a decade ago. We’ve been on the leading edge in the use of electronic medical records, with EpicCare EMR. And we’re one of five leading health care providers in the United States that have formed a consortium to work on new ways to securely exchange electronic health data.

What we have consistently found is that when our members have plenty of information, they make better decisions about their health care needs. For Group Health, that has resulted in both lower per-member costs than other health care providers, and in better medical outcomes for members.

The new mobile app takes that approach to making health care information accessible and useful, and rolls it out in a way that reflects how

our members live today. We know we live and work in a tech-savvy state, and this gives people with mobile devices one more way to use them. Smartphone use is growing so rapidly that in a few years more people will use them to access the Internet than those using PCs. Clearly this is the wave of the future.

The new Group Health app achieves several business goals for us. Most importantly, of course, it promotes better health by connecting members and their health care providers in a new and innovative way. But it also helps bond members to Group Health by creating a convenient and preferred tool they can use to connect with us. It also helps us reach a growing segment of the population that may have a smartphone, but not a PC.

Our patients’ input was a key ingredient in enabling Group Health to offer the right services and features. We heard they want to save time and get answers quickly, and we built the following features to meet and exceed their expectations:

- **My Care** – This offers a direct link between Group Health

members who receive care at one of Group Health's 25 medical centers, to their medical records and caregivers. Users can securely log in to view their medical records, make an appointment, email their doctor, check lab test results, and more.

- **Symptom Checker** – Got a headache, a sore ankle, an upset stomach? App users can take advantage of the Symptom Checker to get quick information about the possible causes of a health problem, and whether it's urgent or is apt to disappear in a day or two.
- **Consulting Nurse** –Our members can call or send secure messages to Group Health's Consulting Nurse Service, any time of the day or night.
- **Locations** – Group Health members can use this feature to find the nearest Group Health medical center. If they have their smartphone's GPS location service turned on, the Locations service will vector them to the nearest clinic.
- **Wait Times** – How long until

my prescription is ready, or my lab results are in? Wait Times has the answer.

- **Settings** – Members can set up the app with their preferred clinic, login information, and more.

Group Health members who want to try the new mobile app can do so simply by using their iPhone to browse to ghc.org/mobile. They'll automatically be asked if they wish to download the app. The mobile app also can be found on iTunes or in the Apple App Store. An Android version of the mobile app is due out later this September.

The Group Health mobile app already is proving popular with our members. More than 7,000 members have downloaded it, and on average we have 750 active Group Health users each day. One member wrote on iTunes "Finally - health care that I can manage from my phone."

I think our mobile app is a big step in our efforts to improve our members' engagement in their care decisions. It's one more way that we're empowering our members and giving them the tools they need for better health.

Dr. Gwendolyn B. O'Keefe has been with Group Health Cooperative in Seattle as both the Medical Director for Informatics and the Executive Director of Care Delivery IT services since 2009. She was recently named CMIO for Group Health. She is a general internist practicing in one of Group Health's Seattle-based clinics. Prior to joining Group Health, O'Keefe was medical director for General Internal Medicine and assistant professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin, where she was a physician champion for EMR implementation. Her previous industry roles include leading a medical and drug safety program at Medco Health Solutions, a leading pharmacy benefit manager; and a similar role as Medical Director at Active Health Management (now owned by Aetna) in New York City.

Her medical school training occurred at SUNY Downstate in Brooklyn, NY. She completed Internal Medicine residency training and served as Chief Medical Resident at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in New York.

Contact Dr. O'Keefe through twitter @gwendolynokeefe.

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