

PREFACE

This report discusses patient acceptance of a device called Health Buddy™. Placed in the home of a chronically ill patient (in our example, one with congestive heart failure, or CHF), this device enables two-way communication between the patient and a care provider in a case management program. Health Hero, Inc., the company that developed the Health Buddy™ and offers the communication service based on it, writes:

"The service is designed to give care providers the frequent communication and baseline data that yield more opportunities to identify potentially serious situations sooner, help caregivers focus their attention on those who need it most and enable them to motivate and educate their patients."

Communication occurs via Health Buddy™ when the patient responds to a short automated survey of perhaps a dozen questions. This is in contrast to most case management programs, where the case manager (usually a nurse) takes the initiative by telephoning the patient. Accordingly, the patient's acceptance of Health Buddy™ and his or her willingness to use it daily is crucial to its success.

This report should be of interest to any who contemplate establishing case management programs for chronically ill patients. Examples may be found in hospitals, independent practice associations, and health maintenance organizations. It should also interest those who, like Health Hero, offer services in support of case management programs.

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