In promoting the adoption of electronic health records (EHRs) and health information exchange, policy makers assume that if physicians have easier access to patient data for sources outside their practice, they will use the data to improve clinical decision making. Further, policy makers have ambitious goals for “secondary” data use, including for population management and quality measurement to support care delivery and payment reforms. This presentation will explore the challenges physicians face in using electronic patient data, drawing on existing research. For example, policy makers are promoting the use of health IT for medication reconciliation. Recent research shows, however, that even when e-prescribers can access additional patient medication history, these data are not de-duplicated and may be difficult to import into the EHR, limiting use. More generally, research suggests that when physicians perceive the costs of accessing data exceed the benefits, they are less likely to use the information. The presentation will consider the implications of these findings for federal health IT efforts.

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