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PROMOTIONAL SYSTEM AND METHOD

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a system and method of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

SUMMARY OF THE PRIOR ART

Previous medical/pharmaceutical loyalty programmes encourage loyalty particularly to one party.

US 2002/0111827 describes a method of encouraging medical scheme members to minimise medical expenses by rewarding the members of the medical scheme with points for using facilities such as health clubs, gymnasium and fitness programmes.

WO 9927483 describes a system for encouraging individual participation in a health management system. Individuals are rewarded with coupons and electronic rewards for adhering to the health management scheme.

Boots the Chemist owned by Boots Company PLC have a customer loyalty program called Boots Advantage Card that rewards program members for shopping at Boots the Chemist. This loyalty program is directed at shopping at Boots the Chemist rather than the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

It would therefore be desirable to have a to have a loyalty and health promotions scheme that encouraged loyalty to more than one party and encouraged a healthy lifestyle.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a promotional system which goes some way to achieving the abovementioned desiderata, or which will at least provide the public or industry with a useful choice.

In a first aspect the present invention consists in a health promotion method including the steps:

enrolling a patient in a patient rewards program;

associating, in said patient rewards program, said patient with a primary health provider;

receiving information on a purchase of a service by a patient;

confirming that said patient is in said patient rewards program and that said purchase of said service is from a primary health provider associated, in said program, with said patient; and

rewarding said patient.

In a second aspect the present invention consists in a health promotion method comprising the steps:

enrolling patients in a patient rewards program;

associating, in said program, each enrolled patient with a primary health provider;

receiving information on a purchase by a patient;

confirming that said purchase is eligible for a reward including confirming that said patient is in said program and that said purchase includes purchase of a service from said primary health provider associated, in said program, with said patient; and where confirmed,

rewarding said patient for said purchase.

In a third aspect the present invention consists in a computer system implementing a health promotion system for rewarding patients, said system including:

data storage for storing patient records, each patient record being associated with a participant in said patient rewards program;

means for creating a patient record in said data storage and health provider records, each health provider record associated with a health provider participating in said program;

means for creating a health provider record in said data storage;

means to associate each patient record with a health provider record, designated as primary health provider ;

means to confirm that a purchase is eligible for a reward includes means to confirm that said purchase includes purchase of services by said patient from the

primary health provider associated with health provider associated with patient record associated with patient; and

means to reward said patient.

To those skilled in the art to which the invention relates, many changes in construction and widely differing embodiments and applications of the invention will suggest themselves without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims. The disclosures and the descriptions herein are purely illustrative and are not intended to be in any sense limiting.

The invention consists in the forgoing and also envisages constructions of which the following gives examples.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is the programmed computer system of the present invention.

Figure 2 is a flow diagram the registration process of the health management program of the current invention.

Figure 3 is a flow diagram the fulfilment process of the health management program.

Figure 4 is a flow diagram the reporting process of the health management program.

Figure 5 is a flow diagram the new registration process of the patients reward program of the present invention.

Figure 6 is a flow diagram the point earning process of the patients reward program.

Figure 7 is a flow diagram the patient reporting process of the patients reward program.

Figure 8 is a flow diagram the points redemption process of the patients reward program.

Figure 9 is a flow diagram of the rewards fulfilment process of the patent rewards program.

Figure 10 is an enrollment form of the health management program of the present invention.

Figure 11 is an enrollment form of the patients reward program of the present invention.

Figure 12 is a coupon of the patients reward program of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention provides a reward system for encouraging individual participation in a health management programme.

The promotional system of the present invention involves a patient, the patient's doctor and a pharmaceutical supplier. The present invention consists of two programmes; a health management programme and a patient rewards programme. Both programs may however be run separately.

The health management program is a patient support program aimed at encouraging patients to live a healthy lifestyle. The health management program aims to encourage patients to eat healthy foods and to exercise regularly. The health management program additionally aims to educate and inform patients. The patient reward program rewards patients in a tangible way for taking steps towards living a healthy lifestyle.

The promotional system of the present invention is organised with the assistance of a programmed computer system. Referring to Figure 1 the computer system 101 consists of at least one CPU 102 and storage 103. The computer system 101 includes a system database 104. The system database 104 is used by the computer system 101 to store information on the participants in the health management program and the patients reward program.

A system operator operates the computer system. The computer system of the present invention provides a system interface 105 for the system operator to enter information and to instruct the computer system 101. The interface 105 may be accessed by computers linked using known networking protocols to the computer system 101 and the interface 105 may include access using an Internet browser.

Information on each patient and each patient's doctor are stored in the system database 104. The information stored includes the patient's name and contact details. Information stored on the doctors includes their name and contact information. The system stores information linking the patient and the patient's doctor. Information is also stored in the system database 104 on the reward points the patient has received and the reward points the patent has spent.

The computerised system 101 is additionally programmed to produce information and reports which are discussed below. These reports are printed out on a printer 106 accessible to the computer system 101. Instructions generated by the computer system 101 may also be printed out using the printer 106. In a alternative embodiment the computer system would communicate instructions in electronic form such as email.

The promotional system of the present invention is promoted to doctors by representatives of the pharmaceutical supplier. Doctors who agree to participate to in the promotional system of the present invention are signed up by the representative of the pharmaceutical supplier. The doctors complete an information form provided by the representative. The doctors either hand the form to the representative who forwards the form to the system operator or forwards the form directly to system operator. In an alternative embodiment doctors may be able to sign up to the promotional system using an online electronic form.

The system operator using the system interface enters the information supplied by the doctor into the system database. In the preferred computer embodiment the computer system would associate a unique identifier with each doctor who enrolled. A welcome letter will be generated by the computer system to inform the doctor that they have registered. The system is programmed to generate the letter either after the system operator has entered the information or on a daily basis or other suitable time frame. Alternatively the system can be programmed to respond to the system operator instructing the computer system to generate the welcome letter.

The welcome letter can be sent to the newly registered doctor by many communication methods including mail, facsimile or email. In the preferred embodiment the doctor when completing the enrolment form would select the preferred means of communication. The computer system would be programmed to generate communications to the doctor in this form unless the form of communication was not suitable for the communication that is to be sent.

The computer system is also programmed generate instructions to send patient sign up kits to doctors. Patient sign up kits are an example of a communication to the doctor that is desirable to sent by mail or other physical delivery means such as using a courier. The computer system can be programmed to generate the instructions to send the patient sign up kits on a daily basis or other suitable time frame. Alternatively the system can be programmed to respond to the system operator instructing the computer system to generate the patient sign up kits sending instructions.

The computer system is programmed generate instructions to send patient sign up kits to doctors to ensure that doctors have an adequate supply of promotional material. The computer system can be programmed to generate the instructions to send the patient sign up kits on a monthly basis or other suitable time frame. Alternatively the system can be programmed to respond to the system operator instructing the computer system to generate the patient sign up kit sending instructions. The system is programmed to generate the instructions to send the patient sign up kits only if instructed by the system operator or if the system based on the number of enrolments of patients received from the doctor and the number of patient sign up kits previously sent to the doctor indicates the doctor needs more patient sign up kits. The system operator will enter a minimum and maximum number of sign up kits a given doctor should have when the doctor enrolls for the promotional system.

In an alternative embodiment the system would be programmed to produce a report indicating that the minimum and maximum number of patient sign up kits a doctor should have should be altered based on the usage shown by the number of

patient sign up kits used by a doctor. The system operator would then alter the numbers.

In the preferred embodiment patients can only enrol in health management programme by consulting with a doctor. To participate in the patient rewards program a patient must first be a member of the health management program. In an alternative embodiment patients could participate in the patient rewards program without being members of the health management program.

Referring to Figure 2 when a patient 202 visits their doctor 201 for a consultation, if the doctor is prescribing a product supplied by a pharmaceutical supplier who is participating in the promotional system then the doctor can sign the patient up for the health management program. The doctor 201 who signs the patient up becomes the patient's 202 primary doctor for the purpose of the system. Primary doctor and primary health provided are use interchangeable throughout this description.

To sign a patient up to the health management program the patient 202 and the doctor 201 complete an enrolment form included in the patient sign up kits previously supplied to the doctor 201. As part of the process of signing up for the disease management program the patient and the doctor both need to sign the enrollment form, a sample of which is shown in Figure 10.

The patient or the doctor then forwards 203 by post or facsimile the enrollment form to the system operator who registers 204 the patient 202 on the health management program. To register a patient 202 on the health management program the system operator inputs 204 the information provided by the patient on the enrolment form into the database 205 using a data input interface. In the preferred embodiment the computer system would associate a unique identifier with each patient who enrolls.

Instructions to send patient welcome packs are generated by the computer system 101 to welcome the patient to the health management program. The system is programmed to generate these instructions either after the system operator has entered the patient information or on a daily basis or other suitable time frame. Alternatively

the system can be programmed to respond to the system operator instructing the computer system to generate the instructions. The computer system is programmed to generate a welcome letter for inclusion in the welcome pack at the same time as the system generates the instructions.

The patient welcome packs includes the patient welcome letter, a patient information booklet, a supporter's guide, a health record booklet or various other promotional materials such as magnetic calendar and reminder stickers. Also included in the pack is an application form for the separate patient reward program.

Referring to Figure 3 the computer system instructions are printed 301, the instructions are fulfilled 302 and send 303 to the patient 304.

In a primary embodiment a patient can only enrol in the patient rewards program if they have previously enrolled in the health management program. Referring to Figure 5, to enrol patient 501 completes the registration form included in the patient welcome pack a sample of which is shown in Figure 11. When the form is complete the patient forwards 502 the form back to the system operator.

To register a patient on the patient program the system operator enters 503 the information provided by the patient on the enrolment form into the database 504 using the input interface. In the preferred embodiment the computer system would associate a unique identifier with each patient who enrolls.

Instructions to send patient welcome packs to the patient rewards program are generated by the computer system to welcome the patient to the patient rewards program. The system is programmed to generate these instructions either after the system operator has entered the patient information or on a daily basis or other suitable time frame. Alternatively the system can be programmed to respond to the system operator instructing the computer system to generate the instructions. The computer system is programmed to generate a welcome letter for inclusion in the welcome pack at the same time as the system generates the instructions.

Referring to Figure 3 the computer system instructions are printed 301 the instructions are fulfilled 302 and send 303 to the patient 304.

The patient then receives a patient rewards program welcome kit which consists of a rewards catalogue outlining the rewards the patient can purchase using the points earned on the program, the welcome letter, numerous pre-paid envelopes, the terms and conditions of the patient rewards programme and a redemption form for redeeming their points to purchase rewards.

The computer system is also programmed to generate coupons and instructions to mail the coupons and other information to patients who are members of the patients reward program. The computer system could be programmed to generate the coupons and instructions on another time basis or in response to instructions from the system operator. In the preferred embodiment the coupon inserts are personalised for the patient. These patient coupon inserts are designed so that the patient will use them for a specific activity. Such activity as refilling their monthly prescriptions or consulting with the doctor that signed them up to the program. A sample of a coupon is shown in Figure 12.

In the preferred embodiment of the patient rewards program the patient can only obtain rewards by visiting their primary doctor that being the doctor who signed them up to the program. Consultations with other doctors do not earn the patient reward points. In this way the doctor and the pharmaceutical supplier both receive the loyalty benefit of the program.

Referring to Figure 6 to obtain points from the coupons the patient 601 takes the coupons to their doctor 602 when going to the doctor for a consultation. The doctor 602 signs or stamps the coupons to indicate that the patient 601 has had a consultation. To ensure the points are added to their rewards point total the patient must forward 603 to the system operator the coupons. To be awarded the reward points the patient may also be required to forward proof of purchase of a pharmaceutical product or products supplied by the pharmaceutical supplier. Proof of purchase may include the cut off tabs from the pharmaceuticals purchased or a receipt showing purchase of the products.

On receipt of the coupons and proof of purchase the system operator will enter 604 the details from the coupons into the database 605 using the system interface and the patients reward points in the system will be increased.

The system is programmed to check that the doctor visited was the primary doctor of the patient or recorded in the database.

The computer system 101 is programmed to generate on a three monthly basis or other suitable time frame a statement of the patients reward points. The statement will include transactions since the last rewards statement was sent out. The statement will include both points added to the patients point balance and points spend on rewards by the patient. The generated statement will be sent to the patient using the patients preferred communication method indicated on the patients rewards points enrolment form. Referring to Figure 7 the system will generate the statements 701 which will be forwarded 702 to each patient 703.

The computerised system is also programmed to generate on a monthly basis or other suitable time frame a report to be sent to doctors who have participated in the scheme showing them their patients who have signed up for the health management program and optionally the patients reward program. The generated report will be sent to the doctors using the doctors preferred communication method indicated on the scheme enrolment form. Referring to Figure 4 the system will generate 401 the report which will be forwarded 402 to each doctor 403.

Referring to Figure 8 to redeem the points a patient 801 completes a redemption form included as either part of the patients reward program welcome pack or printed by the system as part of the patient reward system. The patient 801 forwards 802 the form to the system operator who enters the request for reward redemption 803 into the database. Referring to Figure 9 the computer system is programmed to respond to the entry of a request for rewards redemption by deciding 901 whether the patient has enough points for the reward selected. If the patient has insufficient points the system generates a letter and sends the letter 902 to the patient informing them that they have insufficient points. If the patient has sufficient points then the system generates

instructions for fulfilment of the rewards redemption. The instructions are fulfilled 903 and the reward is sent 904 to the patient 905.

The promotional program of the present invention may also be expanded by offering other features such as an online interface, a smart card system or a bar code system.

To allow for online access by patients and doctors the computer system would be programmed to provide a web access module and an authentication module. The programmed web access module would enable all the patients to have access to the data stored in the database. The web access module would be programmed to respond to URL requests with a web screen requesting the user enter identification information and a password. In an alternative embodiment the web access interface would be programmed to recognise other authentication methods such as USB key rings that identify an individual.

An online interface promotional system would enable patients or doctors to use an Internet browser to enquire as to their account balance or their transaction history. For doctors the online interface would allow doctors to enquire as to the patients that have enrolled in the program. In a further enhancement the online interface would be expanded to allow the patients to select products or services to purchase using their reward points.

The online system could also be programmed to allow a patient to print out customised coupons to take to the doctor or for use when having a script filled. In a further alternative embodiment a smart card system could be used. A smart card system would be read using a smart card reader each time the patient purchased a product supplied by the pharmaceutical supplier or visited a doctor. The use of such a system would eliminate the necessity of the system operator entering patient reward points manually.

To use a smart card the computer system would be programmed to interact with the computers of pharmaceutical retailers and doctors. Such interaction could either be on a real time basis or on a batch basis. In batch mode the computers of the

pharmaceutical retailers and doctor would be programmed to store details of the visit or the purchase made and the identity of the purchaser. The stored information would then be uploaded using standard network protocols to the system computer. The system computer 101 would be programmed to update the database 104 with the points earned by the patient based on the information uploaded by the computers of the pharmaceutical retailers and doctors. If the interaction was on a real time then the computer system 101 would be programmed to either update the points information on a real time basis or store the information and perform the updates in batch mode.

In yet another alternative instead of using a smart card the patients could be issued with a card having a unique bar code printed on it. The method of interacting would differ only from smart cards in that a bar code would be used to identify the patient rather than a smart card. The pharmaceutical retailers and doctors would use a barcode scanner linked to their computer to read the patients identification card to identify patients. Other interaction between the pharmaceutical retailers and doctors computers and the system computer would be the same as for using smart cards. Using bar coded identification cards has the advantage that most pharmaceutical retailers already have bar code readers as the majority of products sold by pharmaceutical retailers have bar codes making identification of product purchases easier.

CLAIMS

1. A health promotion method including the steps:
 - enrolling a patient in a patient rewards program;
 - associating, in said patient rewards program, said patient with a primary health provider;
 - receiving information on a purchase of a service by a patient;
 - confirming that said patient is in said patient rewards program and that said purchase of said service is from a primary health provider associated, in said program, with said patient; and
 - rewarding said patient.

2. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said step of enrolling a patient in a patients reward program includes the steps of:

enrolling said patient in a health management program;
associating, in said health management program said patient enrolled in said health management program with a primary health provider; and
inviting said patient to enrol in said patient reward program;
and said step of associating, in said patient rewards program, said patient with a health provider designated as primary health provider includes:
associating said patient with the same primary health provider as in said health management program.

3. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 2 including the steps of:
enrolling a health provider as a promoter of said health management program;
and
providing said health provider with material to promote said health management program.

4. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 1 to 3 including the steps of:
sending coupons to a patient for said patient enrolled in said patient rewards program, to visit a health provider with a said coupon and said health provider to apply a validation to a said coupon at said visit;
and said step of receiving information on said purchase includes:
receiving a said coupon from said patient, said coupon including a validation indicator.

5. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 4 including the step of customising said coupons for said patient.

6. A health promotion method as claimed in anyone of claims 1 to 5 including the steps of:

associating a unique patient identifier with a patient enrolled in said program;
sending a membership card to said patient, said membership card including said patient identifier; and

wherein said step of receiving information on said purchase includes receiving a patient identifier.

7. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 6 wherein said receiving information includes receiving information over a network.

8. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 7 wherein the network includes the Internet.

9. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 6 to 8 wherein said patient identifier is a unique barcode.

10. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 6 to 8 wherein said membership card is a smart card, and said unique identifier is stored in the memory of said smart card.

11. A health promotion method as claimed in anyone of claims 1 to 10 wherein said step of rewarding said patient includes sending to said patient a reward.

12. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 1 to 10 including the steps of:
associating, in said patient reward program, patient in said reward program with a reward account; and

said step of rewarding said patient includes the steps of:
crediting said reward account;

occasionally providing to said patient a balance of said stored rewards of said rewards account;

occasionally providing to said patient a list of products or services that the said patient can exchange the stored rewards for;

receiving a request from said patient to exchange stored rewards for a product or service from said list; and

debiting the reward account associated with said patient in respect of said request and sending the requested product or a service voucher for the requested service to said patient.

13. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 12 wherein occasionally providing a list to said patient and receiving a request from said patient includes providing and receiving over a network.

14. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 13 wherein the network includes the Internet.

15. A health promotion method as claimed in anyone of claims 1 to 14 including the steps of:

maintaining a product list;

receiving information on a purchase of a product by a patient in conjunction with said information on a purchase of a service by said patient; and

confirming said product is in said product list.

16. A health promotion method comprising the steps:

enrolling patients in a patient rewards program;

associating, in said program, each enrolled patient with a primary health provider;

receiving information on a purchase by a patient;

confirming that said purchase is eligible for a reward including confirming that said patient is in said program and that said purchase includes purchase of a service from said primary health provider associated, in said program, with said patient; and where confirmed,

rewarding said patient for said purchase.

17. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 16 wherein said step of enrolling patients in a patients reward program comprises the steps of:

enrolling patients in a health management program;

associating, in said health management program each patient enrolled in said health management program with a primary health provider; and

inviting each patient enrolled in said health management program to enrol in said patient reward program; and

said step of associating, in said rewards program, each enrolling patient with a primary health provider includes:

associating said enrolled patient with the same primary health provider as in said health management program.

18. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 17 including the steps of:

enrolling health providers as promoters of said health management program; and

providing said health providers with material to promote said health management program.

19. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 16 to 18 including the steps of:

sending coupons to patients enrolled in said patient rewards program, for a said patient to visit a health provider with a said coupon and said health provider to apply a validation to said coupon at said visit; and

said step of receiving information on said purchase includes:

receiving a said coupon from a patient, said coupon including a validation indicator.

20. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 19 wherein said coupons are customised for each patient.

21. A health promotion method as claimed in anyone of claims 16 to 20 including the steps of:

associating a unique identifier with each patient;

sending a membership card to each patient enrolled in said rewards program

each said membership card including a patient identifier; and

wherein said step of receiving information on said purchase includes receiving a patient identifier and purchase information from a health provider.

22. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 21 wherein said received information is received over a network.

23. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 22 wherein the network is the Internet.

24. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 21 to 23 wherein said patient identifier is a unique barcode.

25. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 21 to 24 wherein said membership card is a smart card, and said patient identifier is stored in the memory of said smart card.

26. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 16 to 25 wherein said step of rewarding said patient for said purchase comprises sending to the patient a reward.

27. A health promotion method as claimed in claims 16 to 26 including the steps of:
associating, in said reward program, each enrolled patient with a reward account;

said step of rewarding said patient for said purchase comprises the steps of:

crediting said reward account dependant on said purchase;

occasionally providing to a patient a balance of said stored rewards of said rewards account;

occasionally providing to a patient a list of products or services that the patient can exchange the stored rewards for;

receiving a request from a said patient to exchange stored rewards for a product or service from said list; and

debiting the reward account associated with said patient in respect of said request and sending the requested product or a service voucher for the requested service to said patient.

28. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 27 wherein said received information is received over a network.

29. A health promotion method as claimed in claim 28 wherein the network is the Internet.

30. A health promotion method as claimed in anyone of claims 16 to 29 including the steps of:

maintaining a product list;

wherein said step of confirming that said purchase is eligible for a reward includes confirming that said purchase includes a product is in said product list.

31. A computer system implementing a health promotion system for rewarding patients, said system including:

data storage for storing patient records, each patient record being associated with a participant in said patient rewards program;

means for creating a patient record in said data storage and health provider records, each health provider record associated with a health provider participating in said program;

means for creating a health provider record in said data storage;

means to associate each patient record with a health provider record, designated as primary health provider ;

means to confirm that a purchase is eligible for a reward includes means to confirm that said purchase includes purchase of services by said patient from the primary health provider associated with health provider associated with patient record associated with patient; and

means to reward said patient.

32. A health promotion system as claimed in claim 31 including:

means for sending coupons to patients having a patient record in said data storage, for a patient to visit a health provider with a said coupon and said health provider to apply a validation to said coupon at said visit; and

wherein said means to confirm that a purchase is eligible for a reward includes means to check said validation indicator.

33. A health promotion system as claimed in claim 32 including means to customise said coupons for each patient.

34. A health promotion system as claimed claims 31 to 33 including:

means for associating a unique identifier with each patient record;

means for sending a membership card to each patient having a patient record said membership card including said patient identifier; and

wherein said means to means to confirm that a purchase is eligible for a reward includes means for receiving a patient identifier.

35. A health promotion system as claimed in claim 34 including means for receiving information over a network.

36. A health promotion system as claimed in claim 35 wherein the network is the Internet.

37. A health promotion system as claimed in claims 34 to 36 wherein said patient identifier is a unique barcode.

38. A health promotion system as claimed in claims 34 to 37 wherein said membership card is a smart card, and said patient identifier is stored in the memory of said smart card.

39. A health promotion system as claimed in claims 31 to 38 wherein means to reward said patient for said purchase includes means to cause the patient to be sent a reward.

40. A health promotion system as claimed in claims 31 to 39 including;
means for associating, in said reward program, each enrolled patient with a reward account; and

means for crediting said reward account dependant on said purchased service or product; and

wherein means for rewarding said patient for said purchase includes:

means for occasionally providing to a patient a balance of said stored rewards of said rewards account;

means for maintaining a list of products or services that the patient can exchange the stored rewards for;

means for receiving a request from a said patient to exchange stored rewards for a product or service from said list; and

means for debiting the reward account associated with said patient in respect of said request and sending the requested product or a service voucher for the requested service to said patient.

41. A health promotion system as claimed in claim 40 wherein means for occasionally providing to a patient and means for receiving a request from said patient includes means for providing and receiving over a network.

42. A health promotion system as claimed in claim 41 wherein the network is the Internet.