E-Health grows up

If you follow developments in the e-health arena, you can see that there is A LOT going on. There have been standards meetings, such as [Interop 2008](http://www.interop.com) , where major players in health IT have been discussing how to have their systems talk to each other. Sun Microsystems just created a new group called the [open ehealth foundation](http://www.openehealth.wikispaces.net); promoting best practices for commercial implementations of e-health initiatives. Politicians all have health care on their lips these days and they know e-health is the solution to the problem. Both the U.S. and the E.U. are talking about changing legislation so that it will be easier to pass sensitive patient information from one point to the other via the Internet.

What does that mean for the average user? It means that within a decade you will be interacting with all your doctors in a completely different way than you have before. It will be easier. It will be better. But users also have a learning curve to climb. It's educating yourself about the privacy concerns you have about allowing your medical records to go online. Many are afraid that their data will be easily accessible by anyone or for anyone to break in and get them. Find out about how safe your records really are. Read up on the security seals and accredications sites have received and what they mean. There will never be 100% security on anything. The problem is a human one. If someone really wants your information, they will get it. If that information was locked in a doctor's office it would actually be easier to steal than were it online. Another reality check to ask yourself is, what don't I wish people to see and why? I am not suggesting less security. Not at all. I am saying to take a worst case scenario and look at the repercussions. What would an intruder be interested in? Most likely, they will want your social security number and credit card information so they can commit identity fraud. Credit card companies face the same security issues every day but that hasn't stopped them or their customers from embracing the Internet. I am advocating that we take the lessons learned and apply them to e-health.

There is a lot of work to be done before e-health is an actual reality. Systems need to be built. Laws need to be passed. Educating yourself and taking charge of your health is the best thing you can do. Let's get going!