Patient Portals

NCIOM Task Force on Patient and Family Engagement
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Patient Portals

“A patient portal is a secure online website that gives patients convenient 24-hour access to personal health information.”

(Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology)

Common Features:

• Schedule appointments
• Access health records
• View lab results
• Order prescription refills
• Send secure emails to providers
Figure 1. Drivers, Benefits, and Barriers to Patient Portal Implementation

**BENEFITS**

**Patients**
- Conveniently view personal health information
- Request/schedule appointments
- Communicate securely with providers
- Access credible info

**Health Centers / Providers**
- Administrative efficiencies (fewer calls)
- Routine tasks given to care team
- More time for critical patients

**DRIVERS**

**Meaningful Use**
- Electronic access to health records

**Medical Home**
- Patient-centered health IT and analytic tools

**Health Reform**
- Strategic differentiator for patient engagement

**BARRIERS**

**Patients**
- "Digital divide"
- Literacy
- Language
- Privacy concerns

**Providers**
- Potential for added work
- Lack of reimbursement
- Inappropriate use by patients
- Liability for security breaches

(California HealthCare Foundation, 2013)
What do we know about patient portals?

Those most likely to use patient portals:
- Younger (Shaw and Ferranti, 2011) (Van der Vaart, 2014)
- Higher education and higher SES (Ancker et al., 2014) (Emont, 2011)
- More frequent internet use and greater self-perceived internet skills (Van der Vaart, 2014) (Ancker, 2014)
- Patients with chronic conditions (Emont, 2011) (Ancker et al., 2011)
- Patients who report greater trust and better communication with providers (Lyles et al., 2013)

Portal features most commonly used:
- Filling prescriptions (Adler, 2006) (Sarkar et al., 2014)
- Secure messaging with providers (Adler, 2006) (Ammenwerth et al., 2012) (Lyles et al., 2013)
What do we know about patient portals?

○ Portals impact patient experience and satisfaction
  ● Positive: portals are easy to use, useful, improve communication with providers, and enhance the quality of appointments \((\text{Van der Vaart, 2014})\) \((\text{Wade-Venturo et al., 2013})\) \((\text{Schnipper et al., 2008})\)
  ● Negative: portals hinder communication with providers, are difficult to use \((\text{Emont, 2011})\) \((\text{Zarcadoolas et al., 2013})\)

○ Portals can increase patient engagement
  ● 44% of users reported feeling more involved in their treatment and 37% felt they had more knowledge about their treatment \((\text{Van der Vaart, 2014})\) \((\text{Emont, 2011})\)
  ● Users felt like a “team member” in their own care and more connected to their providers \((\text{Emont, 2011})\)
What do we know about patient portals?

- Portals can increase operational efficiency and reduce health care costs
  - Fewer office visits and phone calls per patient (Emont, 2011) (Ammenwerth et al., 2012)
  - Enhanced efficiency during office visits (Wade-Venturo et al., 2013)
  - Hospitals and providers report savings in lab result delivery costs and appointment scheduling costs (Emont, 2011)

- Use of portals improves patient adherence to treatment (Sarkar et al., 2014) (Ammenwerth et al., 2012)

- Portal use increases preventive care
  - Screening rates for colorectal, breast, and cervical cancer increase with portal use (AHRQ, 2012)

- Use of portals improves disease management
  - Diabetes management, cholesterol control (Shaw and Ferranti, 2011) (Sarkar et al., 2014) (Wade-Venturo et al., 2013)
Unique Opportunities

- Connection with community and statewide HIEs/connection with integrated care systems
  - Must prioritize portal functionality over convenience; as of yet, most health systems go with the convenient option of using the patient portal aligned with the existing EMR/EHR (KLAS, 2012) (Iatric Systems)

- Potential for more patient engagement in quality and safety improvement
  - Some portals allow patients to view and modify lists of their medications and allergies, give feedback on side-effects and other medication-related problems, and view and approve provider notes after appointments (Schnipper et al., 2008) (Delbanco et al., 2012)

- Room for innovation in portal design to attract and sustain more users
  - Special populations
References

What are the benefits and challenges of patient portals?

- Patient perspective
- Provider perspective
- Health system perspective