



Patient Portal Adoption and Optimization can Serve as a Lever for Improving Patient Experience

Key Takeaways

Profile

NYC Health + Hospitals

- New York City, New York
- 93 Locations
- 6,514 Staffed Beds
- Over 1 Million Annual Service Population

Challenges

- NYC Health + Hospitals wanted to drive patient access and patient experience
- Encouraging patients to sign up for the patient portal
- Reaching patients outside of the confines of the hospital or clinical setting

Solutions

- NYC Health + Hospitals implemented Epic's MyChart patient portal
- Implementation coincided with a strong focus on marketing, communication, and patient engagement
- Community outreach programs reach a wide array of demographics

Results

- MyChart is now live at three of eleven locations
- Over 20,000 patients signed up for the patient portal in one year
- Traditionally hard-to-reach demographics are informed of and added on the patient portal while in house

Patient portals can streamline the flow of information to allow for quicker assessments, answers to inquiries, and access to patient information such as medical history and lab results for both staff members and patients. Despite the many advantages of utilizing a patient portal, patients and staff are not always eager to make use of the technology. As a result, organizations often contend with low adoption rates.

"The adoption rates that we see across the board are mainly due to targeted marketing and communications efforts at the point of care," explains Pamela Saechow, Assistant VP for Electronic Medical Record Implementation at NYC Health + Hospitals. "The highest adoption rates we see are from clinics that have made digital patient engagement a part of their clinical operations. Studies have shown that when patients engage electronically with their care team, they are less likely to skip appointments and will be more compliant with their medications and care plans."

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In her role at NYC Health + Hospitals, Saechow is responsible for the implementation and support of EHR modules and applications, including those related to the revenue cycle, clinical functions, and patient experience such as billing, pharmacy modules, and the patient portal, respectively.

When NYC Health + Hospitals made the decision to change its EHR to Epic, leaders realized that the MyChart patient portal had potential to meaningfully support the organization's vision statement. In particular, the patient portal aligned with the goals to drive patient access and patient experience.

Core Investments for Patient Portal Implementation

Saechow explains that implementing the MyChart patient portal requires several different concurrent investments, including strong governance, marketing and communications, legal and risk, and patient engagement.

- Strong governance consists of utilizing executive leaders as well as front line staff who understand how to drive the vision and strategy of patient engagement.
- Marketing and communications involves ensuring that the patient portal is presented in a positive light to patients, including highlighting its availability, functionality, and benefits to the patients and the care providers.
- Legal and risk investments include confirming that all regulatory and safety requirements are met to protect the safety and confidentiality of all users.
- Patient engagement concerns interacting with and educating patients with the intent of getting them signed up for the patient portal. Due to security reasons, patients cannot be signed up for the patient portal by staff or physicians and must do so themselves, making patient engagement all the more important for driving adoption of the portal.

By focusing efforts on each of these four areas of the implementation, NYC Health + Hospitals was able to launch the patient portal with minimal difficulty in several of its acute care hospitals.

Driving Adoption of the Patient Portal

NYC Health + Hospitals focuses primarily on marketing, communication, and patient engagement to increase patient portal adoption. The organization developed pamphlets that describe the advantages of the patient portal, such as its ease of use in accessing personal medical history, obtaining lab results as soon as they are available, and the ability to schedule appointments and exchange messages with physicians. These pamphlets are placed and distributed at key locations throughout the system, with staff members, known as MyChart Patient Portal Liaisons, nearby to talk to patients about



NYC Health + Hospitals Patient Portal Adoption as of 2017

20,047



Patients Active on Portal

NYC Health + Hospitals launched the Epic MyChart patient portal at three of its 11 acute care hospitals. In the year since launch, a substantial number of patients have signed up for the portal.

signing up and answer any questions. MyChart Patient Portal Liaisons engage patients at check-in, in hospitals at tables placed in high-traffic areas, and again at checkout. Doctors are also encouraged to talk about the patient portal when their patients come in for an appointment. Ideally, staff help sign patients up on the spot, otherwise the staff members will make sure patients have an activation code to finish signing up at home and then make a note to have a Care Plan Coordinator follow up with them at a later time.

Additionally, NYC Health + Hospitals has a newly formed Patient Engagement department to explore venues that allow them to get to know more about what the patients are looking for in their care experience and spread the word of the initiatives currently at work in the organization.

“That’s an organization investment we’re making because we see how important it is,” Saechow explains. “That’s one of those things I think has been a real positive thing for us. We have a structure in place that makes this a priority and a group of really talented experts who help us with the patient experience to drive this to the next level.”

The patient engagement group at NYC Health + Hospitals also visits senior homes, areas with community outreach programs, and other venues to reach a wide array of demographics outside of the confines of the hospital or clinical setting. The organization’s goal is to reach each of the over one million patients and provide them all with access to the patient portal.

Despite all of this, Saechow notes that not everyone is so easy to reach. NYC Health + Hospitals has a large population of patients that do not have access to a computer. In order to allow these patients to utilize the benefits of the patient portal, the organization has been looking at opportunities to work with technology companies to issue patients devices that would allow them access to the portal.

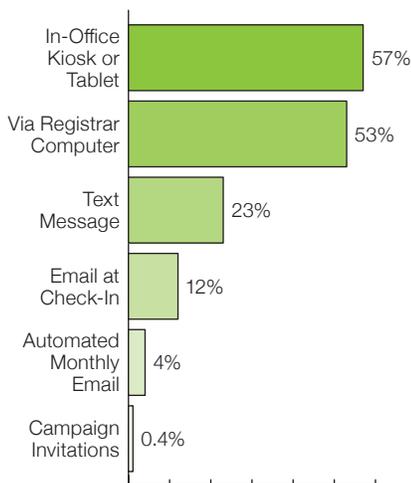
Current and Future Plans

Since going live last year, NYC Health + Hospitals has launched the Epic EHR and MyChart patient portal at three of its 11 acute care hospitals, with all the rest still using the previous EHR system and thus without access to MyChart. In those three locations, which serve approximately 6% of the system’s entire patient population, the organization has a total of 20,047 active patients and is seeing significant increase in enrollment each month as more targeted signup efforts are deployed.

The IT department at NYC Health + Hospitals plans to continue to work with the patient engagement group to mature the processes and come up with a more advanced toolkit for engaging and enrolling patients, with the goal of maximizing the opportunities to enroll all patients in the system. Together, the teams will look at several initiatives such as partnering with tech companies to provide devices to patients who otherwise do not have access to them, expanding global communication to reach those beyond local hospitals with tactics such as advertisements in subway stations, and methods for leveraging social media to open up communication with patients.

Effectiveness of Patient Portal Registration Methods

Source: athenaResearch (2015)



A study by athenaResearch found that in-house registration methods have a vastly higher yield for patient portal adoption than automated and at-home registration methods.

What does this mean for you?

C-Suite

- Patient portal usage can increase efficiency in scheduling, answering patient questions, and more

Industry

- Patient portals are becoming a standard tool across the healthcare continuum
- A larger push to patient interaction yields more personalized methods of care

Peers

- Utilizing marketing and public relations increases portal adoption