Background

- Electronic Medical Records (EMR) have become a necessary component of patient care.
- Research shows the utilities presented by patient portals through an EMR such as increasing patient engagement and making the patient-provider communication more efficient.
- At our large academic family medicine practice (JFMA), a new EMR (Epic) with a patient portal (MyChart) was implemented in the 8 months preceding this project.
- MyChart allows patients to request medical appointments directly, shorten registration time with electronic check in, receive and view test results, request prescription renewals, and have secure direct communication with their healthcare teams.
- Our identified problem was the limited number of patients who were signed up for the patient portal, thus not getting the benefits of the portal.
- We aimed to increase the number of JFMA patients signed up with MyChart by 50% over a 5 month time frame by educating providers and staff on ways to implement patient portal sign up into the office visit as well raising awareness of the portal for both providers and patients.

Methods

Interventions:
1. Stakeholder engagement: patients and physicians have multiple opportunities to increase MyChart signup at multiple points throughout a visit.
2. Stakeholder engagement: MyChart aims in this project.
3. Interventions: Residents brainstormed and prioritized changes that would work within our system using existing resources.
4. Intervention testing: We evaluated Epic sign-up access points and identified limitations based on computer security and computer availability.

Results

"MyChart Attitudes and Usage Survey" Results: 31 respondents

- Most providers described their concerns as related to computer accessibility for patients.
- To the question, “What barriers do you see that keep your patients from signing up?” common themes of responses included lack of computer access, lack of email address, computer and smartphone literacy, and forgetting to do it during the visit.

Discussion

- The number of new patient enrollments each month ranged from 200 to 260 and peaked during March. The first month of data collection showed a nadir of about 12%. Most recently, in May the percentage increased to 22%.
- There continued to be a steady increase in the percent of JFMA patients that signed up for MyChart both before and after our interventions. Our interventions had no noticeable impact on the number of patients signing up for MyChart – suggesting that other approaches are needed to approach our aims in this project.
- Survey results show that most providers know how to sign up patients for MyChart and use it to communicate with patients.
- Limitations include the decreasing target population of patients overtime, as more patients signed up.
- Data gathering was limited by our inability to analyze data on a scale smaller than a monthly basis. Also, as more patients signed up for MyChart, the number of possible enrollments decreased.
- Future projects may investigate more effective interventions. Possible interventions may include a computer or tablet in the JFMA waiting room. Pre- and post-intervention surveys of providers may provide more insight on education-based interventions. We hope that increased patient and provider participation in the portal will improve provider-patient collaboration in patient healthcare.

References


