

21st Century Cures Act: Patient Perceptions on Open Information Sharing in Vermont Primary Care Clinics

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Background

- In April 2021, the 21st Century Cures Act (“Cures Act”) federally mandated the immediate release of progress notes, laboratory test results, and radiology/pathology reports to all patients’ electronic health record (EHR) portals
- The University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMHC) adopted the initiative in June 2017
- The literature shows that clinicians have historically expressed reservations regarding patient uptake of shared notes

Objective

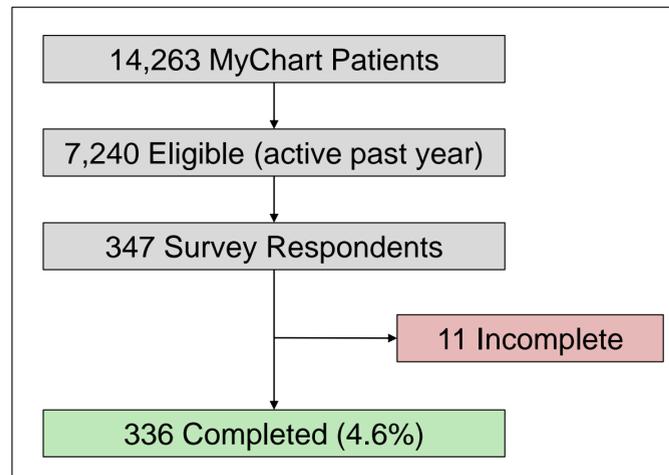
- Investigate patient perspectives relating to various aspects of shared notes within the patient portal

Methods

Study Design: Cross-sectional survey

Subjects/Setting: Adult UVMHC primary care patients, with at least one office visit/telemedicine encounter and at least one MyChart portal login in last year

- Colchester Family Medicine
- South Burlington Adult Primary Care

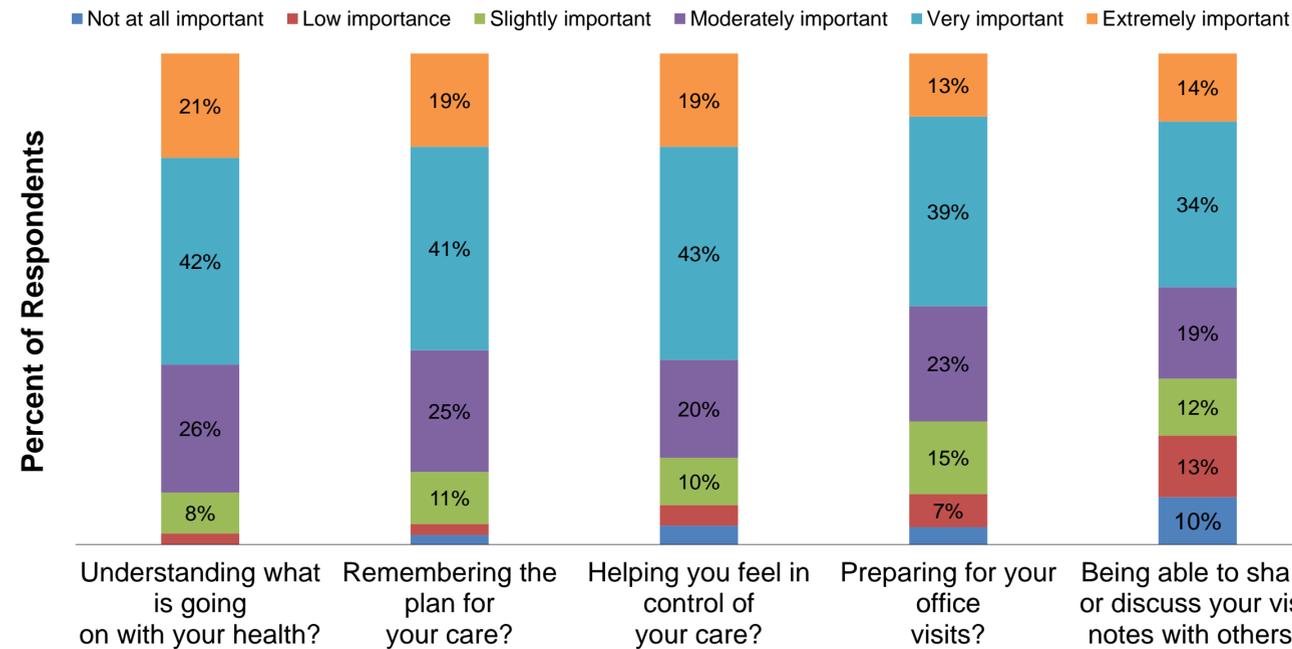


Results

Making visit notes available to patients on MyChart is a good idea	
Response	Percent of Respondents
Strongly disagree	6%
Disagree	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Agree	19%
Strongly agree	71%

How easy is it for you to find your visit note(s) on MyChart?	
Response	Percent of Respondents
Very difficult	0%
Difficult	4%
Not too difficult	20%
Easy	43%
Very easy	33%

“How important is reading your visit note in...”



In the past 12 months..	Yes	No	Don't know
Did any provider <u>encourage you</u> to read their visit notes?	26%	52%	22%
Did <u>you mention</u> to any provider that you had read the visit note they wrote on MyChart?	25%	57%	18%

More or less <u>worried</u> after reading notes?	
Less worried	22%
No change	65%
More worried	2%
I was never worried	10%

Thematic Analysis of Survey Comments

Open communication and two-way access	<i>“An open line of communication is priceless.”</i>
Independence	<i>“I find it extremely helpful to [have] control over my own care and options.”</i>
Preferred form of communication	<i>“It is really a primary tool for me to communicate with my care providers.”</i>
Provider use is inconsistent	<i>“I wish my various providers would read the notes as much as I do.”</i>
Quicker access to physicians	<i>“48 hours waiting for a response is reasonable. More than that makes me feel like ‘what’s the point?’”</i>
Increase awareness of notes availability	<i>“Honestly - I had completely forgotten about the notes until this survey...a post-visit reminder would be helpful.”</i>

Discussion

- Provider concerns about patient stress may be overstated, as patients appear to benefit from shared notes through increased engagement with their health, communication with providers, and adherence to care plans
- Efforts directed towards provider-to-patient empowerment and patient education may improve usage of shared notes

Limitations

- Relatively low response rate (4.6%) suggests potential non-response bias
- Scope of survey limited to primary care and family medicine
- Self-selection - survey respondents may consist of those most energized (positive or negative) about shared notes

Future Directions

- Partner with providers to develop and implement trainings on patient expectations and optimal notes
- Design and perform a randomized experiment to investigate portal usage and perceptions following training
- Expand survey population to include more locations and modalities (e.g., in-person)