secure exchange
solutions

ADVANCING PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

How MYONECHART with Direct Messaging is Improving Patient Care

Overview

Portals enable critical patient-provider communications for better health outcomes

Ease-of-use and the ability to be more involved in their own healthcare is what MYONECHART users had to say about their experience with the portal. The user response is significant, given programs such as Meaningful Use, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) and Merit-based Payment System (MIPS), increasingly placing high value on patient access to information and patient-provider communications, all in the name of patient-centered care and better patient outcomes. As a result, Health Information Exchanges (HIEs) are becoming vital resources for clinicians to achieve quality goals and meet the needs of the changing healthcare landscape.

With new focus on data exchange as a mechanism for increased patient engagement and improved health outcomes, HIEs are critical to the IT infrastructure of providers and are positioned to provide a centralized experience for end users looking to access all of their healthcare information from one app.

While clinicians can check the box on providing patients with access to their health information through various applications and platforms, consumer utilization of these products is often a challenge. Frequently, patients are limited to applications that are siloed, requiring multiple steps to view and manage data across multiple doctors, hospitals and other care providers. As federal incentive programs continue to evolve, and as consumer expectations for online, user-friendly, instant access continues to grow, the value of patient applications for both patients and providers will increase as well.

The Utah Health Information Network (UHIN), the state-designated HIE in Utah, is responding to this new patient-centered care dynamic. Given that patient applications are a window through which patients can view their health information and proactively participate in the management of their care, and that UHIN's role as an HIE positions the organization to allow patients to securely access their data from all providers participating in the HIE, UHIN is elevating patient engagement with an application that gives end users secure access to all healthcare information in one spot.

The UHIN HIE patient application, MYONECHART, offers the powerful ability for patients and providers to communicate using the standard transport protocol found in all Certified EHRs – Direct messaging. By enabling Direct messaging (through UHIN's technology partner Secure Exchange Solutions), users finally have the ability not only to view their information across all care environments, but also to interact with providers and share their records with new providers, both key to patient accountability and linked to improved outcomes.

Elevating the Patient Experience

Patient engagement and experience go hand in hand. Platforms which fall short typically experience low adoption and limited use of patient applications to facilitate care decisions. Integrating the patient experience into the application empowers patients to proactively communicate with their providers and engage them in a dialogue about their care. In fact, research shows that when patients can see their own health data, they gain ownership of their own wellness and are better prepared to interact with their providers about their care.[1]

Recognizing that patient engagement is critical to positive health outcomes, UHIN employs a secure platform that facilitates patient engagement while embracing the patient experience. The MYONECHART application brings in the wealth of patient data gathered by the CHIE, UHIN's clinical health information exchange (HIE), sourced from providers throughout Utah and neighboring states. The application empowers patients to not only access their

health information but to communicate with current providers and to share records with new providers. Future versions will include the ability for patients to review benefit information, have proxy access for designated family members, like elderly parents or children, to upload their glucose levels, blood pressure, activity information from tracking devises, and much more.

MYONECHART encourages patients to proactively manage their care by communicating with providers across the care continuum using the Direct secure messaging tools. The combination of a single point of entry and open communication channels makes for a seamless and user-centered experience.


"The UHIN HIE patient portal, MYONECHART, leverages both advanced HIE technology and the powerful ability for patients and providers to communicate using the standard transport protocol found in all Certified EHRs – Direct messaging."

Communication is Key to Patient-Centered Care

Patient-provider communication is critical to improved patient outcomes. Although portals serve as hubs for patients and providers, applications with layered functionality, such as MYONECHART with Direct secure messaging, contribute to greater ease-of-use by enabling bi-directional communication between patient and provider, which contributes to patient loyalty and helps to build trust between patients and providers. In fact, "research shows that open lines of communication create trust - and vice versa - and that trusting relationships are key to better healthcare outcomes." [2]

Greater patient involvement in the healthcare decision making process is critically important to monitoring symptoms, managing prescriptions, and administering therapies in ways that support improved health. That is why the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has advocated for better patient data access in recent years, making patient access and viewing, downloading, and transmitting capabilities mandatory for most providers.[3]
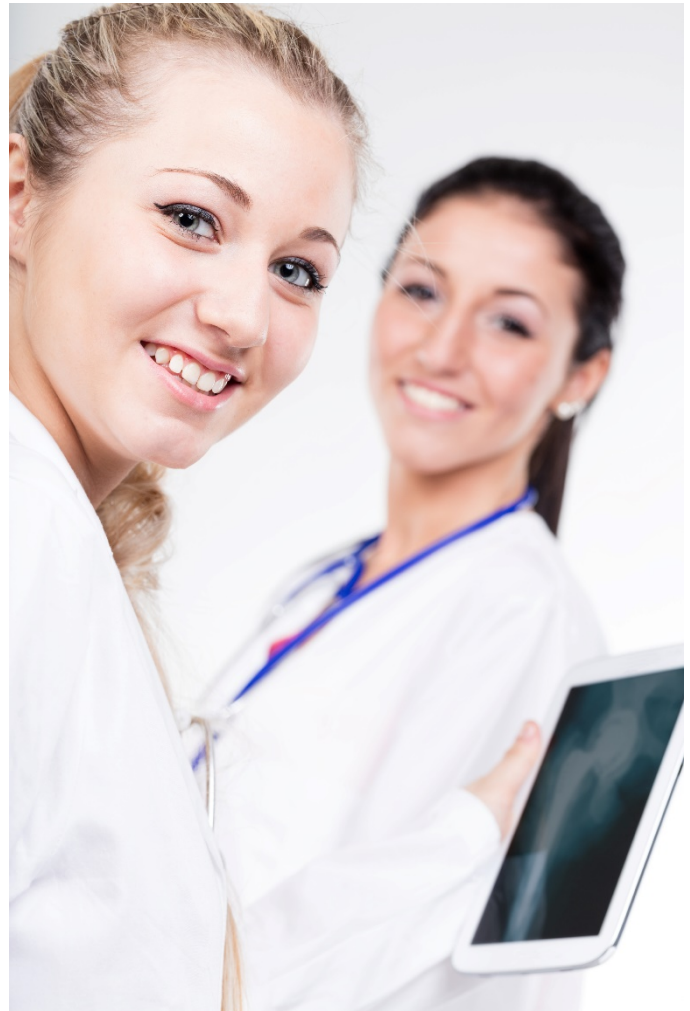
"Research shows that open lines of communication create trust - and vice versa - and that trusting relationships are key to better healthcare outcomes."

Applications That Engage Patients Provide Clear Benefits

What once required face-to-face or telephone contact with providers, patients can now do from home and at their own convenience, making it more likely that patients will interact with the application and take action to improve their health. From entering their own information, completing required paperwork, scheduling appointments, to paying bills, viewing lab work and messaging providers, patient applications are enabling consumers to have greater involvement in managing their care.

In 2015, 64% of physicians had an electronic health record (EHR) with the capability to exchange secure messages with patients, 63% of physicians had the capability for their patients to electronically view their medical record, 41% had the capability for patients to download their medical record, and 19% had the capability for patients to electronically send (transmit) their medical record to a third party.[4] These numbers are continuously growing as the patient-provider connection is an increasingly critical component of federal incentive and care quality programs, and as they prove their value to providers managing patient care.

Just as consumer applications benefit patients, providers realize benefits of open lines of communication as well. Consumer applications, such as MYONECHART with Direct secure messaging, enable the exchange of health information in ways that improve workflows crucial to clinicians. MYONECHART enables clinicians to securely communicate with their patients and to have their patients be able to share the data from providers outside of the PCP's system.

Given the clear benefit of consumer applications to both patients and providers, it would seem that any application giving patients access to their medical records would be widely adopted, but they are not. In fact, portal adoption has been low, due to limited functionality and siloed platforms. "Although nearly 90 percent of hospitals and providers offer patient portal access, true patient portal adoption lingers at around 15 percent, according to Government Accountability Office data." [5]

Why aren't patients accessing the portals offered by hospitals and providers? Lack of a single access point for patients to all of their health data means patients must register in many different provider portals. Moreover, "too often, portals have not offered the features patients want most — online scheduling and bill payment, full views of their medical records and test results, and secure messaging with their physicians."[6] In addition, confusing interfaces, slow response times and medical jargon in notes contributed to lack of patient engagement with portals.

Applications That Engage Patients Provide Clear Benefits

MYONECHART is demonstrating how ease-of-use, increased functionality and greater patient engagement contributes to improved health outcomes by offering, or planning to offer, the functionality that is valuable to end users. In fact, research recently published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research (JMIR), revealed health benefits to patients using secure Direct messaging.[7]

By enabling patients and providers to collaborate and share information, MYONECHART facilitates clinical decision-making through the efficient exchange of health data, improving care coordination and data accuracy.

"MYONECHART is demonstrating how ease-of-use, increased functionality and greater patient engagement contributes to improved health outcomes by offering, or planning to offer, the functionality that is valuable to end users."

MYONECHART Making An Impact With Patients

The patient application is not a stand-alone solution. Rather, it is a tool to enable higher quality interactions between providers and patients. Providers can connect with patients in new ways, while engaging them in a richer dialogue that ultimately improves care quality and outcomes.

"Our network of providers, payers, government and other stakeholders rely on UHIN to deliver solutions that meet the needs of today's healthcare environment," said Teresa Rivera, President and CEO of UHIN. "After reviewing many of the solutions in the marketplace, we developed our own patient application with the goal of truly meeting the needs of our patient community. We included the standards-based, secure messaging protocol because we know how important communication and engagement is to the healthcare process and to improving health outcomes."

According to the JMIR study, Direct messaging is important to improving health outcomes for patients with type 2 Diabetes. "With regard to secure messaging, research by Dr. Stephanie L. Shimada and colleagues said patients who used this feature likely saw better health because it boosts patient-provider communication. Because patients consult with their providers more frequently, providers are able to adjust medications, remind patients to adhere to treatment plans, answer questions, and coordinate care between patients and other providers."[8]

MYONECHART demonstrates how a focus on ease-of-use and enhanced functionality, both of which lead to greater patient engagement, can have a positive impact for patients and providers alike. As communication between patient and provider continues to be an important part of improving patient outcomes, applications like MYONECHART with Direct secure messaging will increasingly play a central role in the healthcare process.

Mobile optimization is yet another feature of MYONECHART. According to a HIMSS survey, 58 percent of healthcare professionals connect with their patients via mobile optimized patient portals.[9] Recognizing the importance of connecting with patients on the platforms they use most, mobile optimization was a necessary part of the platform development. "Ease-of-use is vital to adoption, making access to MYONECHART on mobile devices a logical addition," said Andrew Burchett, Chief Information Security Officer at UHIN.

Figure 1 MYONECHART with Direct messaging portal interface
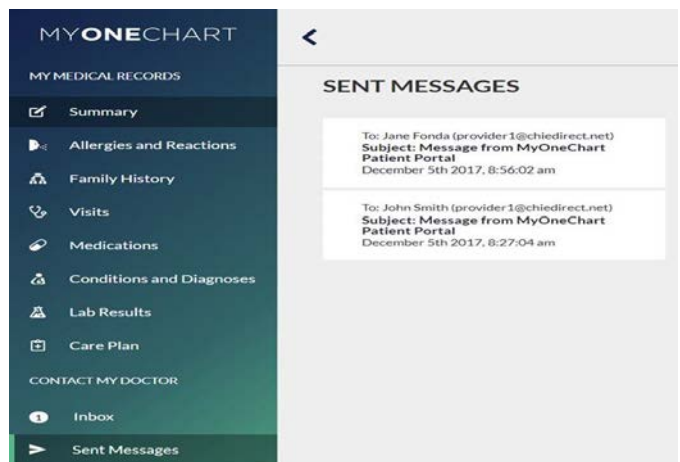
MYONECHART Patient Portal Key Attributes

Figure 2 MYONECHART Family History

Figure 3 MYONECHART Visit Summary

Conclusion

Patient applications are becoming an increasingly important tool for healthcare providers and patients. As the industry moves toward a patient-centered care model, the ability to communicate with providers securely while monitoring care and scheduling appointments will be the norm rather than the exception. Access to this critical information through one streamlined platform will be an expectation, especially as greater functionality and ease-of-use continues to drive enhanced application interfaces.

Sources
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About UHIN

UHIN is a nonprofit coalition of healthcare providers, payers, state government and other stakeholders that have come together to reduce healthcare costs and improve quality and access for the community by enabling providers, payers and patients to exchange information electronically. UHIN focuses on creating electronic exchange solutions that work for the entire healthcare community, from single-provider practices to large integrated healthcare systems. For more information, visit www.uhin.org

About Secure Exchange Solutions

Secure Exchange Solutions provides flexible, scalable, Direct-compliant software and services to enable secure communications across organizational boundaries. Secure Exchange's EHNAC DTAAP accredited HISP services empower healthcare stakeholders to improve quality of care, manage compliance and risk and reduce communication costs.

The Secure Exchange HISP is an industry leader with robust directory services, automated event-based notification services, and flexible deployment methods to accommodate evolving user needs. The Secure Exchange event notification service stands apart with superior provider-patient attribution and notification settings determined by providers to fit seamlessly into preferred workflows. Secure Exchange has a nationwide client base that includes HIEs, EHRs, PMRs, patient applications, hospitals, health systems, laboratories, providers, consumers, healthcare exchanges and health plans.

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