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

Jared Stone, MS3
Alicia Jacobs, MD, FAAFP

Additional Authors
Anthony Quach, MS3; Rachel McEntee, MD;
Charles D Maclean, MD; Yao Li, MD
Disclosures

- None.
Objectives

(1) Define the purpose of the 21st Century Cures Act

(2) Identify three positive themes related to the use of shared notes

(3) Identify three ways the use of shared notes can be improved
Setting

- University of Vermont Health Network (UVMHN)
  - Integrated academic health system serving more than one million residents across Vermont and Northern New York
  - Six hospitals plus a home health and hospice provider

- Primary care clinics
  - Four family medicine
  - Four adult primary care

- EHR
  - Epic and MyChart
Background

- The Cures Act requires that all patients’ progress notes, lab testing results, and radiology/pathology reports be immediately released to their electronic health record portals.

- It aims to:
  - Increase choice and access for patients and providers
  - Improve patient engagement and health outcomes
  - Ease regulatory burdens associated with use of EHR systems

- The University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMMC) adopted the initiative of ‘open notes’ in June 2017.

- Our study sought to investigate patient perspectives relating to various aspects of shared notes within the patient portal:
  - Clinicians often cite patient worry, confusion, and stress as reasons why patients should not have access to shared notes.
Methods

- Eligible patients had active MyChart accounts, and had both logged into their portal and attended at least one in-office or telehealth visit within one year prior to the study.

14,263 MyChart Patients

7,240 Eligible (active past year)

347 Survey Respondents

11 Incomplete

336 Completed (4.6%)
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Making visit notes available to patients on MyChart is a good idea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How easy is it for you to find your visit note(s) on MyChart?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not too difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results cont.

“How important is reading your visit note in…”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Understanding what is going on with your health?</th>
<th>Remembering the plan for your care?</th>
<th>Helping you feel in control of your care?</th>
<th>Preparing for your office visits?</th>
<th>Being able to share or discuss your visit notes with others?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages less than 5% not labeled
## Results cont.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More or less worried after reading notes?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less worried</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More worried</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was never worried</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Themes

Open communication and two-way access

“An open line of communication is priceless.”

Independence

“I find it extremely helpful to [have] control over my own care and options.”

Preferred form of communication

“It is really a primary tool for me to communicate with my care providers.”
Negative Themes

Provider use is inconsistent

“I wish my various providers would read the notes as much as I do.”

Quicker access to physicians

“48 hours waiting for a response is reasonable. More than that makes me feel like ‘what's the point?’”

Increase awareness of notes availability

“Honestly - I had completely forgotten about the notes until this survey...a post-visit reminder would be helpful.”
Discussion

• Provider concerns about patient stress may be miscalculated or overstated
  • Over 90% believe shared notes is a “good idea”
  • Only 2% “more worried” due to shared notes

• Patients appear to benefit meaningfully from shared notes
  • Increased engagement with and understanding of their health
  • Involvement with care plans
  • Communication with their providers

• Efforts directed toward provider-to-patient empowerment and patient education may improve usage of shared notes
  • About 3% of all respondents did not access their notes specifically because they were unaware notes were available
Considerations and Limitations

• Response rate
  • Potential non-response bias

• Scope of survey
  • Limited to primary care and family medicine

• Self-selection
  • Most energized (positively or negatively) about shared notes
Future Directions

- MyChart access for ESL speakers
- Serious diagnoses
- Errors and the process of correction
- Feelings of offense or judgment
A Parting Thought

“I consider my doctor and other health providers and myself as a team. [They] provide me with their professional opinions and advice. In conjunction with them, [I] make the final decision as to any treatments or medicines. And they respect my informed decision. I take responsibility for my health. We are a GREAT team!!!”
References


Thank you!

jared.stone@med.uvm.edu
alicia.jacobs@uvmhealth.org