



Ix Insights #32

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Harvesting Value: Early Findings from Kaiser Permanente HealthConnect

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Background: Kaiser Permanente's HealthConnect™ is an electronic health record (EHR) system linked to a personal health record (PHR) system that members can access through a portal called "My Health Manager." HealthConnect is integrated, with real-time interfaces, across Kaiser's outpatient and inpatient settings as well as its ancillary care system. HealthConnect is the largest civilian EHR in the world; EHRs are in place for all of Kaiser's 8.6 million active members, and 1.8 million members are using My Health Manager. The three webinar speakers talked about the general value of an EHR/PHR for a delivery system, strategies to encourage member portal use, and ways to use PHRs to engage members in their own care management.

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Insight #1: Each successive application of an EHR increases the amount and complexity of data required but also increases the EHR's positive impact on providers and the quality and process of care.

- Charting and documentation improve providers' effectiveness through uniform access to patients' histories.
- Automated reminders improve clinicians' adherence to practice guidelines.
- Internet access improves clinician-patient communication.
- Medication order entry reduces prescribing errors.
- Remote access to the system increases timeliness, convenience, and efficiency.

- Clinical decision support allows doctors to implement the latest medical knowledge at the point of care.
- A fully integrated system (across inpatient, outpatient, and ancillary services) allows quality measurement and improvement as well as care research.

Insight #2: Engaging patients with PHRs that are only longitudinal records of their health has been a hard sell.

- Providing members with the capability *to connect to the medical system in the context of their medical record* is much more powerful.

Insight #3: The more ways in which an EHR/PHR can make the health care experience convenient for members, the more members are likely to use it.

- Viewing lab test results is one of the most popular features on the site, as is the “e-mail your doctor” function.
 - Over 14 million lab results have been viewed at least once online.
 - Each test result has a link to Kaiser’s online encyclopedia that explains the test and results.
- Members can make and change appointments online.
 - There are lower no-show rates for these self-booked appointments.

Insight #4: Contrary to doctors’ fears, physician-patient e-mail can reduce their workloads.

- According to a Kaiser study published in the *American Journal of Managed Care*, patients who use secure messaging to doctors are 7-10% less likely to schedule an office visit and make 14% fewer phone calls.
- According to another Kaiser study published in *The Permanente Journal*, nearly half of all patient e-mails began with a clear request, and e-mail messages from members are clinically relevant: fewer than 5% of members e-mailed for a nonmedical reason.
- The asynchronous communication that e-mail allows is more efficient and convenient for doctors and patients.

Insight #5: Patients are very satisfied with physician-patient e-mail.

- Based on member feedback, Kaiser refers to physician-patient e-mail as “not just a patient satisfier, but a patient delighter.”
- Members who e-mailed their PCPs reported a high degree of satisfaction with their e-mail encounters: 85% rated e-mail encounters 8 or 9 on a 1-9 scale.
- Patient satisfaction was associated with:
 - Whether all their questions were answered;
 - The completeness of the answers;
 - Whether e-mail exchanges led to the results members wanted;

- The courtesy of the PCP's response;
- The amount of influence members wanted and had in decisions; and
- The timeliness of the PCP's response:
 - Kaiser promised a response within 48 hours, but nearly 75% of patients reported receiving a response within 24 hours (96% reported receiving a response within 48 hours).
 - Members' ratings of physician response time fell sharply after 24 hours, but over 90% of those receiving responses within 25-48 hours still rated the response time as "good" or "excellent."
- Patient satisfaction was not associated with:
 - Clinicians' historic office visit satisfaction scores;
 - The specifics of members' e-mailed requests; or
 - The specific characteristics of clinician responses (e.g., whether there were grammatical mistakes).
- Allowing patients to create their own e-mail messages (within a 1,000-character limit) has been more effective than providing them with checklist templates for e-mail messages.
- Kaiser records all e-mails as encounters, but more analysis is needed to determine whether they should be considered virtual encounters or the equivalent of phone calls.

Insight #6: In addition to reducing patient visits and phone calls to clinicians, member use of the EHR/PHR is associated with other cost efficiencies.

- Online appointment scheduling reduces call center costs (by \$2.58/appointment for Kaiser).
- Online prescription refills mailed to patients' homes reduces drug costs (by \$4-\$13/prescription for Kaiser).

Insight #7: Online programs can be effective in helping members change behaviors.

- Kaiser's online "Healthy Lifestyles" self-help programs have helped members make behavioral changes to improve their health. The following results are from a survey of registered users of the programs; percentages indicate members that reported positive results at 180 days:
 - Weight and Fitness Program: 55% (n = 4745)
 - Smoking Program: 54% (n = 453)
 - Nutrition Program: 89% (n = 1701)
 - Managing stress: 59% (n = 992)

Insight #8: Situating member registration right next to member sign-on on the member portal, and placing them both front-and-center, is a clear best practice.

- Easy log-in gets members to secure features on the site as quickly and easily as possible.
- Onsite registration and activation is currently available at some Kaiser clinics.
- To address the drop-off between registration and activation, Kaiser will roll out a one-step registration process in February 2008. With the one-step process, members will no longer have to wait to receive a password in the mail to begin using the site.

Insight #9: Member activation can be increased by marketing inside and outside the health plan. Kaiser has found the following most useful:

- Internal actions:
 - Encouragement from doctors and other caregivers to use My Health Manager. This has been the most influential factor in increasing member use of the portal. Physicians' encouraging patients to use the "e-mail your doctor" feature takes activation one step higher. Phlebotomists' encouraging patients to view lab results online has also been successful.
 - Flyers, posters, and banners hung throughout facilities (tailored to the setting, e.g., in labs, posters read: "Review Your Results Online.")
 - Scripts for telephone representatives to help them educate callers about My Health Manager.
 - Campaign to register and activate Kaiser employees. Kaiser has discovered that their employees make the best ambassadors for My Health Manager.
- External marketing:
 - Print ads,
 - Television ads,
 - Radio ads, and
 - Press releases.

Insight #10: Previsit forms that patients fill out in advance can make visits more efficient.

- Kaiser is pilot testing the use of these forms through its member portal.

Additional Resources

Kaiser Permanente

With 8.7 million members, Kaiser Permanente is the nation's largest nonprofit health plan. An integrated system comprising Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, and Permanente Medical Groups, it serves 9 states and the District of Columbia. Kaiser's stated mission is to provide

affordable, quality health care services and to improve the health of its members and the communities it serves.

For more information, please visit
<http://www.kaiserpermanente.org/>

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