

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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Patient Adoption of a Web Portal at Group Health Cooperative

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Background: Patient Web portals show promise as tools to support the care of patients. Factors influencing patient adoption of Web portals are only partially understood. Preliminary work suggests that patient-provider messaging and access to medical records are key factors. In April 2002, Group Health Cooperative (GHC) established the MyGroupHealth Web portal. It included a customizable homepage, secure messaging, and prescription refill services. Sixteen months later, in August 2003, MyGroupHealth was enhanced to include access to key portions of the electronic medical record (laboratory/radiology results, current health conditions, allergies, immunizations) and on-line appointment requests.

Methods: We used an observational, retrospective, pre/post study design to examine rates of web portal adoption during 16-month periods before and after introduction of the medical record and appointment request components of the MyGroupHealth portal in August of 2003. Monthly portal sign-up and usage data were assembled for April 2002–December 2004. Descriptive and linear modeling methods were used to compare enrollee adoption of the Web portal in the two periods.

Results: In the 16 months before portal enhancement 40,901 GHC members registered for MyGroupHealth. Growth in registrations was linear, averaging 3,056 (± 793) per month. In the post-enhancement period 75,415 members registered, at a monthly rate of 4,713 (± 829), which was also highly linear. As of December 2004, 24.5% of GHC members receiving care through integrated group practice (IGP) clinics had registered for portal usage. We observed similar patterns of increase in pharmacy refills and secure messaging across the two periods (e.g., mean monthly pharmacy refills increased from 3,564 to 10,238). After August 2003 patient review of lab results was the most active portal service. In September 2003, 2,078 patients viewed 11,007 result pages. These figures increased to 12,036 and 85,581, respectively, by December 2004.

Conclusions: Enhanced access to patient medical record and lab results was associated with increased adoption of a patient web portal. With 25% of IGP members currently registered on the Web portal, there is no evidence of a plateau in adoption.