

Health Information Compliance Alert

Patient Engagement: Embrace New HIT Options to Harness Your Practice Potential

Tip: Texting is the communication modus operandi of most patients.

As technology moves healthcare forward in leaps and bounds, many providers find the pace of health IT hard to keep up with. But to remain competitive in the new quality-centered, patient-focused world, you must be open to all forms of patient outreach.

Look Beyond Traditional Engagement Portals

Online patient portals are still useful and should already be part of your EHR protocols. Even older patients are tech savvy today and prefer an interface that allows for quick access to health information, provider updates and services, and easy payment options.

Yesterday's news: But new ideologies are moving beyond the traditional patient-provider gateways. "Web-based portals are an old-school method of addressing patient engagement," says **John Squire**, President and Chief Operating Officer at Amazing Charts. "Yes, they are useful for asynchronous communication, and allow practices to check the box for Advancing Care in MIPS. For patients with access to a web browser, the portal allows them to make appointments, see lab reports, and fill out forms."

Here's why: Master the basics for your web-based engagement tools, but don't be surprised if your patients are looking for more enhanced platforms. "More advanced portals allow both patient and physician to prepare for an upcoming appointment, so there are fewer surprises and facetime is maximized," Squire advises. "After the visit, the portal allows for fast follow-up and patient education handouts, but requires the patient to log in and is often perceived as cumbersome so ongoing, frequent use is less probable."

Employ Technologies That Patients Can Understand

What the healthcare market continues to suggest is that today's patient doesn't like to wait. To remain competitive you must embrace the HIT paradigm shift and go mobile. And remember quick, easy, and secure access to physicians and industry insight is essential to practice medicine and meet governmental demands these days.

From smartphones to tablets to laptops ☐ people are on the move, and secure texting and messaging lets you manage your patient's health issues quickly. "The next generation of patient engagement uses mobile platforms and applications like instant messaging," Squire warns. "These technologies better fit the staccato lifestyles of today's patients." He adds, "Patients love the ability to ask questions using short snippets of text and avoiding lengthy turnaround times."

Federal input: Since Medicare payment has been tied to adopting Certified EHR Technology (CEHRT) for a while now, most providers and their partners are already cyber friendly. Taking the next step to utilize patient strategies that implement mobility is inevitable, and that is likely one of the reasons why secure messaging is a reporting option under MACRA's IT component, Advancing Care Information (ACI). See the ACI reporting options at: <https://qpp.cms.gov/measures/aci>.

It's Just Smart Business

"Since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Meaningful Use (MU), medical providers are relying on cost-effective services that take pay-for-performance into consideration. These services include texting," explains **Michael DeFranco**, founder and CEO of Lua, a leader in healthcare mobility. "The growth of innovative technologies can

lower the cost of delivering healthcare, and provide for better patient outcomes and patient satisfaction."

Texting in particular speeds the daily work flow, connecting physicians, staff, and business partners with the easy distribution of information. Its efficiency and cost effectiveness can successfully reduce readmissions, coordinate CCM, help with e-Prescriptions, and increase and improve patient engagement, suggests DeFranco.

What to look for: SMS texting is not secure, but many vendors offer HIPAA-compliant messaging programs connected to their EHR offerings. Applications that offer technical support and education to staff and business associates are important, too.

"Practices should look for CEHRT that supports messaging with open standards like Direct Messaging, as well as more advanced platforms like Twistle," Squire suggests. "The key is the EHR's ability to save text conversations easily as part of permanent medical record."

Boost Your Practice Capital with These Patient Engagement Tips

Using an EHR with texting capabilities is both cost efficient and patient friendly. Security is critical, but the advantages of sparking dialogue between patient and provider, particularly in regard to the maintenance of chronic care conditions, can't be ignored.

Take a look Squire's expert advice on what can be gained on the patient engagement front from implementing mobile technologies:

- Ask patients to fill out pre-visit information, and the physician can be sure all required lab results and problem history are present, thereby maximizing face-to-face time
- Send automated pre- and post-visit messages
- Use more automated streams of disease-specific communications for post-visit patient education and medication reminders
- Adopt secure mobile text messaging
- Start monitoring patient biometrics remotely

Reality: "Texting is easier, more timely, and more continuous for the patient," Squire maintains. "It helps fill the inter-visit space, making office visits more productive." And that saves time and money, improving the provider-patient relationship in the process.

Resource: To find out more about enhanced EHRs and patient engagement options at Amazing Charts, visit <http://amazingcharts.com>.