

Better Outcomes Through Patient Portals



Online patient portals help healthcare providers to reduce the time patients spend in the facility and to cut medical costs, a new study shows.

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The [study](#), conducted by The University of Texas at Austin and published in June 2020 issue of *MIS Quarterly*, is based on a unique, longitudinal dataset of portal use by 3,266 patients with congestive heart failure, across a 12-year period at a large academic medical centre in North Texas. It looks into the association between the portal use and individual health outcomes.

Portals enable patients to request medication refills, view test results, track their medical history and interact with physicians. From hospitals, they also require substantial investments in human capital and training. For this particular study, the researchers analysed the portal features used and the time patients spent engaging with them.

The results show that active patient participation in decision-making, care management and self-care is associated with better health outcomes. For example, for patients with chronic disease who engage with their health providers via the portal the likelihood was less for hospitalisation (2%-4%), need of emergency visits (3.2%) or readmittance (2%). Such patients also have 11% shorter hospital stays and, subsequently, incur lower hospital charges. For hospitals, this also resulted in substantial savings (about \$30,000 per patient for a medium-sized facility). The authors underscore the importance of financial incentives for patients to engage regularly with their providers after discharge and during care transition through online services. Here, mobile technology might play a key role, and providers have already begun offering patients free health-tracking accessories.

With telehealth services booming since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the authors point out that hospitals and insurance companies should now more than ever look into the opportunities to engage with patients, including through patient portals. According to lead researcher Indranil Bardhan, professor of information, risk and operations management in UT Austin's McCombs School of Business, this will help create the lifestyle improvements that lead to better health outcomes. Furthermore, effective use of patient health information systems is a good predictor of future patient behaviours and health outcomes.

Source: [The University of Texas at Austin](#)

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