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Prescription for ER Overuse: Engage Patients in EHR Use

A marketing campaign is credited with driving patient awareness about how they can interact with EHRs, health data and patient portals in Louisiana.

The state has long had poor healthcare ratings. Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum marketing and communications manager, Jamie Martin told *HealthCareITNews* that a partnership with the state department of health on a population health initiative saw some serious progress in cutting unnecessary A & E use. The state launched both a direct-to-consumer patient engagement campaign and a health information exchange-enabled emergency department data registry.

In one year, this has resulted in a 23 percent increase in health IT use among at-risk patients and a 10.2 percent drop in non-emergent use of emergency departments among members of one of the state's Medicaid MCOs.

"This all came about from a partnership with the state department of health because Louisiana for far too long has been on the wrong end of healthcare ratings. So on the one hand, engaging consumers in the use of health IT to manage their care was critical to improving our standing in healthcare ratings," said Martin.

The core drive behind the partnership was the implementation of marketing and communication plans state-wide on the benefits of health IT, electronic health records, patient portals, and the importance of having a paper copy of or electronic access to one's medical records.

"Between August 2015 and May 2016, consumer awareness of EHRs went up 23 percent and opt-in to Louisiana's Health Information Exchange went up 3 percent, and patient portal use rose 31 percent," Martin said. "Additionally, the number of patients with current copies of their health information went up 9 percent, and the number of patients requesting copies of or electronic access to records went up 12 percent."

At the same time, Louisiana began a pilot programme with one of its Medicaid MCOs. Its objective was to study how the state could use data in a more efficient manner to provide both the MCO and physician clinics in the pilot with information that would cut avoidable emergency room visits.

The partners wanted to be more aggressive with chronic disease management for patients who were going to the emergency room for chronic conditions instead of utilising primary care.

The Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum said the efforts so far are advancing the broader goals of population health with patient engagement one of the key factor in making population health a success.

Source: HealthcareITNews

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