

Patient Electronic Portal Use:

Literature Review

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## PATIENT ELECTRONIC PORTAL USE

### **Patient Electronic Portal Use**

Technological advancements has made accessing health information easier for patients through online applications referred to as patient portals. The resources available to patients include: the ability to schedule appointments, refill prescriptions, make payments, request referrals, and view test results (Medline Plus, 2018). Users need a computer and internet access to make an account and utilize the online application. Electronic patient portals are beneficial because they give patients 24-hour access to their health records. In addition, electronic patient portals allow patients to view health information from multiple providers at one central location (Medline Plus, 2018).

### **Oncology Nursing Perceptions of Patient Electronic Portal Use: A Qualitative Analysis**

In March of 2017 a study was conducted using qualitative research. Thirteen nurses with a range of credentials and experience, were chosen as the subjects for this study. The object of the study was to, “Identify nursing staff reactions to and perceptions of electronic portal use in a cancer setting” (Gerber, Beg, Duncan, Gill, & Craddock Lee, 2017, para. 1). The location of the study was an outpatient clinic at the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center in Dallas, Texas. This study was performed using two focus groups, and a thematic analysis was performed on the gathered data (Gerber et al., 2017).

### **Key Points**

Key themes that were considered during this study include: work volume and flow, patient expectations and safety, variation in use of communication technologies, and education and management (Gerber et al., 2017). The subjects were provided with a moderator guide at the

## PATIENT ELECTRONIC PORTAL USE

beginning of the study. This questionnaire was created by the investigators for this purpose. Topics included: past experiences with electronic patient portals, preferred communication channel, level of comfort using technology, and how their patients have adapted to the electronic patient portal (Gerber, 2017). Participants were given time to compare and contrast answers with each other. After all moderator guides were complete, the results were analyzed.

### **Assumptions**

Research cannot be conducted without assumptions. For this study, some of the investigators assumptions include: physicians and patients are willing to utilize the application, patients have the means and knowledge to access the electronic patient portal from home, healthcare professionals have additional time during the day to answer questions or return calls, and that patients will understand the test results and medical terminology used.

### **Deficit/Conclusion**

The article states, “Electronic patient portals appear to have a major impact on outpatient oncology nursing in the authors’ setting” (Gerber et al., 2017, para. 15). An analysis of the moderator guide resulted in mixed reviews. The subjects main concern on implementing an electronic patient portal was the effect it would have on work volume and flow. It was their opinion that staffing would need to be increased to meet the demands of the electronic charting and return phone calls required for a patient portal (Gerber et al., 2017). Another concern that was expressed by the subjects was in regard to patient expectations and safety. A majority of the nurses were worried that patients would expect immediate results or worse, report medical emergencies to the patient portal (Gerber et al., 2017). Likewise, many of the subjects cited a

## PATIENT ELECTRONIC PORTAL USE

number of benefits that an electronic patient portal could provide. The results of the study stated, “although a study of this nature is not definitive, the findings suggest that oncology practices and cancer centers may wish to address portal implementation and function among clinical staff on a regular basis to deal with emerging concerns” (Gerber et al., 2017, para. 15).

## PATIENT ELECTRONIC PORTAL USE

Gerber, D., Beg, M., Duncan, T., Gill, M., & Craddock Lee, S. (2017). Oncology Nursing Perceptions of Patient Electronic Portal Use: A Qualitative Analysis. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, (44)2, 165-170. DOI: 10.1188/17

Medline Plus. (2018). Patient Portals- An online tool for your health. Retrieved September 6, 2019, from <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000880.htm>