Attaining and maintaining organizational buy-in for your MyChart Patient Portal

Our blog series, “Making the most of your Epic MyChart Patient Portal,” continues as we discuss the importance of organizational buy-in as a key success factor in your program. From physicians’ timely responses to patient communications to confirmation of scheduling requests, every area must fully support your portal program. Here, we explore how best to attain and maintain buy-in throughout your organization.

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According to research just released this summer, access to a patient portal leads to “fewer emergency department visits and more outpatient clinic visits”—meaning that these patients are making better decisions about how to manage their care and conditions, avoiding costly emergency visits and inpatient admissions. And while the majority of healthcare organizations have given their patients access to these portals, utilization continues to lag, despite the benefits they provide.

Over the last few weeks, we have shared with you our perspective on how to make the most of your Epic MyChart Patient Portal program: how it drives patient engagement and better patient care, why your portal program needs an oversight committee, and the high-value portal features that lead to greater adoption and utilization among your patient population.

Another key pillar of this conversation is the way in which organizational buy-in contributes to a successful program. Consider an example: if your organization has implemented a secure messaging feature, but physicians—for whatever reason—do not reply to patient questions in an established timely manner, that will diminish patients’ desire to continue engaging in the portal. Likewise, if patients can request appointments, but no one confirms them, that too can lead to frustration with the portal.

Similarly, imagine a patient given instructions to access the patient portal for lab results within three business days, but two weeks later, after multiple attempts, the patient still cannot find
the results. Would this experience build the patient’s confidence and see the value of using the portal the next time? Or, would a patient revert to simply call the office for the results? A bad experience or frustration can lead to a patient no longer seeing the value of the patient portal. From the physician perspective, when a patient initiates the manual process – which can include multiple phone calls between parties to resolve – all parties are spending more time on the task than experienced with the patient portal.

Instead, think about how valuable it would be to proactively address these simple yet impactful items and have all care team members bought into and supportive of your Epic MyChart Patient Portal program. It’s more than just adopting and implementing the features; it’s about getting all clinicians and administrative staff on board and realizing what is in it for them as well.

So, how can organizations encourage cross-departmental buy-in?

Start by making sure each involved department has a champion on the oversight committee to represent their perspective and needs. Ensure that each group has a say in how MyChart features can help the individuals, departments, and is part of the organization’s overall strategy. True collaboration for the greater good can be challenging to achieve and may seem too time-consuming. But the benefits of collaborating to gain cross-departmental buy-in will result in achieving results more quickly. Slow down and gain cross-departmental buy-in from your teams. Your patients and your internal teams will thank you for it.

Once you have the right groups involved, invest in defining workflows, providing role-based training, establishing clear expectations with change management, and provide the ongoing support necessary to maintain long-term buy-in and involvement. Not knowing how to perform a task is a huge barrier to buy-in, so everyone in the organization must understand how they contribute to the patient portal’s success. Each interaction with a patient can make or break adoption. Equipping resources with the information and skills they need to interact with and use the features of the MyChart patient portal will ultimately impact the patients’ experience. Physicians should not only know that they must respond to patients’ questions within the benchmark time frame; they must also know how to access those messages. Schedulers should know how to access patients’ appointment requests and integrate them into the daily schedules. Clinicians should know how to access patients’ online questionnaires efficiently, and so on.

With so many factors that contribute to a patient’s experience, the time you invest in building a robust MyChart patient portal program will go a long way toward success. Build a team and success will follow.

Last month, Nuance’s Director of Epic MyChart Service Desk, Mandy Love, hosted a webinar on making the most of your MyChart investment. If you missed it, you can find it on YouTube. Also, look for our conclusion to this series as we examine how you can best support your patients in their use of the portal.
Tags: EHR, EHR Services, patient engagement

About Michael Clark

Michael Clark is the senior vice president and general manager for Provider Solutions within Nuance’s Healthcare division, leading EHR Services, clinical documentation creation and improvement. A results-driven, accountable leader, Michael aligns organizations to prioritize the customer experience, honor the product roadmap, and execute against the company vision. He has more than 20 years of experience in the healthcare market and a breadth of experience driving and transforming global teams, products, and services. Prior to joining Nuance in 2016, Michael held several executive leadership roles at healthcare organizations including Evariant and MedQuist. Michael holds a B.A. in Marketing and International Business from Miami University and MBA from the University of Miami School of Business.

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