Despite our always-on, always-connected world, patient portal usage remains low. In part three of our series, “Making the Most of your Epic MyChart Patient Portal,” we examine the ways in which key features have a positive impact on patient experience and satisfaction as well as adoption of the portal.

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As our lives become increasingly digital, we all expect—and maybe even depend...
on—connectivity. From pre-ordering a coffee to checking on our bank account, we want easy, online access to the fundamental aspects of modern life.

And those expectations extend to our medical information too. Patient portals in general and Epic MyChart, in particular, have been created to meet those expectations, giving patients an easy way to engage with their providers to ultimately receive better care. Making the most of your investment in these resources has become a central focus for many healthcare organizations, and a significant part of this effort lies in driving adoption of the portal.

So how can an organization drive patient portal adoption? Patient awareness campaigns are the right first step, but unless a patient has a positive experience accessing and using the portal the first time, adoption and engagement will remain low. Several features are available within the patient portal to help provide patients with the experience they expect. Given the multitude of touchpoints a patient has with your office—from the front office personnel and billing to seeing the physicians—it is essential to have ongoing discussions with your patient portal oversight committee about which features to enable and, more importantly, support.

Let’s examine some of the features that have been shown to create the most value for patients and the organization.

**Seven high-value patient portal features for Epic MyChart**

**Bill payment** – Consider offering an easy way for patients to pay their bills directly online. It is a win-win for you and the patient by providing a lower-cost, convenient, and easily accessible way to collect payments for services delivered.

**Test results** – Whether lab work or imaging exams, patients want a convenient way to find their test results in a reasonable timeframe. Establishing a results release process and communicating what the patients can expect to see in the portal can significantly improve patients’ engagement with their care team. Online delivery also saves your teams the time, effort, and cost that would otherwise be involved with manually communicating test results.

**Scheduling** – Today’s patients are more technologically savvy—and desire more mobility—than ever before. Online access to appointment scheduling/rescheduling, and even finding coveted last-minute appointments, can be a huge success factor in adoption of the patient portal; this feature has been proven essential to patient satisfaction and your organization as a whole.

**Communication** – By far, communication is of the utmost importance between care teams and patients. Enabling secure communication between physicians and patients helps with efficiency, consistency, and ease of access to help. Secure messaging ties each communication to the patient’s record, further improving care teams’ ability to deliver follow-up and continuity of care.

**Mobile apps** – Complement the online portal with a mobile application to keep patients’ information at their fingertips, on the go. We live in a mobile world, and the flexibility for patients to update records, check results, pay a bill, manage appointments, submit a question,
or request a prescription refill is no longer a “nice-to-have.” Empowering your patients with mobile access to the patient portal can be a game-changer for adoption and satisfaction.

**e-Visits** – As telemedicine becomes a more significant part of healthcare, enabling e-Visits through Epic’s MyChart mobile application for specific complaints is another way to help improve patient engagement. Through a series of questions to narrow down the complaint, patients can be guided toward the need for an in-person visit or an e-Vist.

**Questionnaires and eCheck-in** – Creating a smooth in-office experience with online questionnaires and check-in processes; patients can complete these online, ahead of their appointments, which goes a long way in improving their perceived value of the patient portal. These tools can also make it easier for your organization to capture patient-generated health data and use it effectively to deliver better care.

When patients have access to these features, they’re not only more engaged with their care—which leads to better outcomes—they’re also more satisfied “customers” because they’re receiving what they need, when they need it.

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. And, be sure to stay tuned as we continue our series over the coming month. In our next edition, we’ll explore how organizational buy-in is a crucial success factor in MyChart portal programs.

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**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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