

Explaining the Effect of Health Status on Patient Portal Use and Health System Utilization

Emergent Research Forum papers

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Abstract

Since the inception of patient portals, it has been widely assumed that portals would empower patients by increasing their participation in health decisions and subsequently reducing the burden on healthcare organizations. To investigate whether this assumption holds, we analyzed the relationship between frequency of portal use and frequency of patient clinical encounters. We found that patient portal usage is proportional to patient clinical encounters, contrary to the assumption that portal use would decrease patient encounters. Patients with poorer health tended to have more encounters and subsequently more portal usage than those with better health, who had fewer encounters, indicating a possible common factor of patients' health status. Significant differences between patients with poorer and better health status were observed for patient encounter types and portal feature usage. In addition, some portal features such as appointment scheduling, flowsheet report, medical advice, encounter details and prescription renewal were associated with fewer encounters.

Keywords

Electronic health records, health status, patient portals, use statistics, e-health