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The Proof is in the Power: Social Community Integration in Electronic Health Records for Elevated Patient Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

With national health expenditures currently comprising nearly one fifth of the U.S. economy, recent regulations aimed at lowering costs attempt to incentivize physicians to help promote patient empowerment by encouraging increased engagement in their Certified Electronic Health Record Technology (CEHRT) platform (i.e. online health portal). Patient portals are an area of emerging technology in which the need to improve value to the patient is present. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently discussed their intentions to improve the patient experience and, therefore, help patients feel more empowered. It is assumed that those who are empowered are associated with cost-effective use of healthcare resources, lower healthcare dependence, and increasingly sensible behaviors that amplify health outcomes. One underlying concept in the empowerment literature is that the phenomenon is tied to an increased sense of community. Through the lens of Kanter's theory of empowerment and therefore expanding into the network theory of social capital, this work suggests that the integration of an online sharing community within a patient's CEHRT platform could lead to a higher level of patient empowerment. This empowerment could, in turn, lead patients to become even more involved in the online community and, therefore, encourage greater empowerment of other patients forming a hypothetical empowerment loop. It is proposed that the relationship between increased social capital and patient empowerment is moderated by the use of reputation signals to increase member role clarity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Ledet is a PhD candidate at the University of South Alabama. She is a full time Marketing Instructor at Louisiana State University. She received her Masters in Business Administration from Nicholls State University. Her research interests include services marketing with a focus on healthcare, digital marketing, marketing channels, sales analytics, and salesforce motivation.