Two Birds, One Stone:

Engaging Patients and Meeting MU with Patient Portals!

To meet Meaningful Use Stage 2 providers need more than 5% of their patients to access their patient portal and send a secure message. Many providers express concern over how to achieve this objective. The following are some benefits of patient portals and suggestions for increasing patient engagement.

Benefits of Patient Portals:

* Encouraging your patients access their patient portal and send secure messaging not only helps you meet your Meaningful Use requirements, but it also helps save you both time and money!
  + Cut down on calls to and from your office for referrals, Rx refills, appointment scheduling, and routine health concerns.
  + Save the expense of having to send appointment reminders and lab results through the mail.
  + Electronic appointment reminders help reduce missed appointments.
  + Requesting that patients update their medical history, demographic, and contact information through the portal prior to their appointment helps save you valuable time during visits.
* Portals improve patients’ satisfaction!
  + Patients can schedule appointments more suited to their schedule.
  + Patients receive quicker lab and test results.
  + Patients can take a more active role in their healthcare by accessing their health information anytime from anywhere.
  + Patients can communicate with their physicians in a timelier manner, expediting refill/referral requests and provider responses.
  + Patients can electronically submit their blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and other health data, saving them a trip to your office.

Suggestions for Controlling Patient Behavior:

* Utilize the patient’s idle time between seeing the nurse and waiting for the doctor during visits by having the portal available in the exam room.
* Have a kiosk or portal interface available in the waiting room and assign a staff member to train patients before or after appointments.

(Training and engagement can be accomplished during the above-mentioned idle time as well!)

* Send emails to your patients with educational information that discusses the benefits of the portal and walks them through the portal access process. (Including screen shots is a great visual aid!)

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