Drivers of Electronic Communications

- Meaningful Use requirements
- Greater focus on patient centered care
- Increased patient demand
- Program, recognition and other external forces
  - NCQA PCMH recognition
  - Centers for Medicare & Medicaid demonstration projects

Data Says:

- 8 million US adults interested in online visits with doctors\(^1\)
- 2009: 33\% of doctors communicating with patients online compared to 16\% in 2004\(^2\)
- 9 million patients e-mailed their physician\(^3\)

\(^3\)
Data Says (cont.)

- 2002 Harris survey found 90% of those online would to communicate with physician online
  - More than two-thirds would like to be able to:
    - Get an appointment (71%)
    - Refill prescriptions (71%)
    - Receive the results of medical tests (70%)
  - Majority indicated it would influence choice of physician and health plan if some had online communications and others did not

Frame Work

- Seven key areas for consideration when implementing electronic patient communications
  - Strategic fit and priority
  - Selection process and implementation team
  - Integration into communications and workflow
  - HIPAA issues and clinic policies
  - Systems implementation and training
  - Marketing and enrollment
  - On-going performance monitoring

Strategic Fit and Priority

- Barriers and Challenges
  - No strategy or plan
  - Have not identified areas of priority for practice
    - Patient portal?
      - Which components to include?
        - What is priority order? RX Refills, appointments, etc.
    - E-mail communications?
    - Phone visits?
Strategic Fit and Priority (cont.)

• Best Practice
  – Identify needs for practice, where are the biggest pain points?
    • Calls for refills, test results?
  – Develop plan with timelines, stick to plan, hold team accountable
  – Identify
    • What expertise/resources are available in practice?
    • Which are easiest barriers to overcome in practice?
      – Leadership and physician challenges
      – Staff and resource challenges

Selection Process and Implementation Team

• Barriers and Challenges
  – Often selection process is not critically thought out
    • What physician friends are doing?
    • What you think you need (gut vs. data)
  – Not assessing and incorporating patient preferences/expectations
• Best Practices
  – Identifying leader and appropriate team members to champion implementation
  – Ensuring input from all (e.g., staff/patient focus groups and/or surveys)

Assess Patient Preferences

• Have you asked your patients what they would like to see regarding electronic access recently? Ever?
  – Responses might be different than you expected
    • May not want e-visits; may want ability to schedule appointments, request refills, receive test results
  – ACTION ITEM:
    • Consider quick survey to determine or prioritize what your practice is planning on doing
Integrations and Communications into Workflow

- Barriers and Challenges
  - Practices assign an army of one to do everything
  - Practices do not account for after hours, holiday and weekend coverage

- Best Practice
  - Develop processes for handling patient electronic communications
  - Set up electronic communication guidelines/agreements with patients and specialists

System Implementation and Training

- Barriers
  - Often underestimate amount of resources and time to implement electronic communications
  - Costs for IT upgrades and training

- Best Practices
  - Implement a strategic plan for both technical and staff training
  - Offer ongoing support/training
  - Plan for new hires and turn-over

Marketing and Enrollment

- Barriers and challenges
  - Lack of including all practice members in marketing efforts to patients
  - Lack establishing “help desk” staff to answer potential enrollees’ questions

- Best Practices
  - Educational/enrollment materials appropriate for patient age and literacy level
  - User-friendly and efficient enrollment process
  - Multiple mediums for marketing and engaging patients
  - Monitoring marketing efforts to determine what works
On-Going Performance Monitoring

- Barriers
  - Lack of documented monitoring process

- Best Practices
  - Identifies monitoring champion within practice
  - Roles and responsibilities included in job description; tied to performance evaluation
  - Monitoring report/template developed and used to monitor electronic communications including:
    - Timeliness for response/response time
    - Appropriate/accurate response provided
    - Appropriate documentation in patient record

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On-Going Performance Monitoring (cont.)

- Best Practices (cont.)
  - Scheduled and regular feedback to leadership and staff regarding compliance to policy
  - Integration of team approach to identify solutions for improvement areas

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Summary

- Start small
- Focus on one component/area of electronic communications
- Use systematic structure to cover all key components
- This is going to take time
- Electronic communication is not going away

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