

Quality 2015- 2016

Goal 19 – Patient Portal

Promoting your patient portal to your patients

Patient participation

Patients can access a portal on devices such as smartphones, laptops, tablets or PCs. With an email address and internet access, patients can access a portal from anywhere and at any time.

Ways to raise awareness of portals include:

- when a patient rings for an appointment or repeat script
- when patients request their lab results by phone
- when patients request information by email
- sending letters to patients
- offering flyers in the waiting room
- displaying posters in waiting rooms and offices
- recording an audio messages on the on-hold function of the practice's phone
- develop a practice process – engage all staff
- have a practice champion
- get patients to register and activate their account while in the practice
- ask GP's and nurses to promote during consultation
- have a patient advocate
- promote in practice newsletter and practice website
- get some patient stories to share
- promote on the bottom of invoice template

Feedback from practices and patients

Practices on the Patient Portal have found the emails they receive are mainly repeat prescription requests or a follow up question, rather than a new health issue. These practices receive on average 1.5 emails from each patient per year.

Patient Experience

Alex is an ex-practice nurse, a full time professional worker in her 50s, fit and was diagnosed with Type II diabetes about 10 years ago.

Alex was already in discussion about starting insulin with the clinical team at her Hamilton general practice.



“The process was awesome. I talked to a nurse who said we need to start thinking about using insulin. Their service was incredibly patient-centred, I found it helpful, useful, streamlined, and easy.”

Alex started on six units of insulin and is now injecting 28 units.

“Every time I go up two units, it means I need to contact my practice. Given I work full time, I don’t want to visit them on a regular basis. Being able to do this via email is so easy, it’s a great alternative to playing telephone tag with my GP or nurse.”

Alex’s GP uses ManageMyHealth, and between them they’ve sent about 10-15 emails via the Patient Portal take my blood sugar readings and put them into ManageMyHealth, so my general practice team can see up-to-date results. This helps us make better decisions,” she says.

Using the patient portal when out of town

The family of a Gisborne patient needing emergency care while in Auckland was able to log into the ManageMyHealth Patient Portal to access vital information for the clinicians.

Stuart Hockey, GP at City Medical Gisborne Ltd, says his patient was visiting family in Auckland in November last year and was rushed to the emergency department with cardiac complications and palpitations.

“He had a history of cardiac issues and was on a number of medications, and he didn’t have his medication on him because of the acute nature of his presentation,” says Stuart.

“When asked about his medication by a clinician he was unable to tell them, instead referring to the Patient Portal as a way to find out,” says Stuart.

“His daughter was able to log in using hospital internet access on her iPad and retrieve information about the medication, dosage and his background history.”

“The patient was reassured to know they can access the information anytime, anywhere, as he was stuck without it. It was empowering for him and his family, in a very stressful environment.

“We have carefully selected a group of patients to introduce the Patient Portal to, and we are slowly increasing access to more patients,” says Stuart. The most effective way to encourage patients to register is by mentioning it during face to face consultations.



Patient Portal survey

South City Health in Hamilton now has over 900 patients (10 per cent of eligible patients) activated on the Patient Portal, having introduced it after a survey of patients showed a high level of interest.

GP Mark Taylor is the most enthusiastic promoter of service amongst the practice's nine GPs, and says he highlights the benefits of the Patient Portal in real life situations.

“Before a blood test, I’ll tell the patient that they can register for the Patient Portal and get an alert when the results are ready, instead of having to call the practice or waiting for us to call,” says Mark.

“Often I need to see the patient again in a week’s time. With the Patient Portal, we can manage this online and save appointment times. The patient can simply flick me an email letting me know how they are getting along.”

Mark says he currently gets about five emails a week.

“It’s mostly the 22 to 45 year olds. They are busy working people who are already familiar with the internet and see the advantage of not having to come in to the practice.”

Patients can also book their appointment online. “I only work part time, often changing the hours and days I’m at the practice. The Patient Portal lets my patients see my availability and book an appointment accordingly.

Further reading and resources

- <http://healthitboard.health.govt.nz/patient-portals>
- Search the Pinnacle website for further useful resources including One Point Lessons (OPL)

