

Improving Patient Portal Activation Rate for Newborns in the Well Baby Nursery

Background: Patient portal access has been shown to improve patient outcomes, increase medication adherence and improve primary care follow-up.

Aim: Our quality improvement (QI) project aimed to increase patient portal (EPICs MyChart) activation rates from less than 25% to 75% for newborns in the well-baby nursery in a New York hospital.

Methods: Using the model for QI improvement methodology, we implemented the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) problem-solving approach to address low patient portal activation rates in the newborn nursery. We used stakeholder interviews, monthly rounds with a team of nurses and physicians, and faculty feedback sessions to guide improvement efforts. Interventions included implementing a standardized workflow and algorithm, structured scripts to discuss patient portal activation, and flyers in various languages for parent education. Our outcome measure was patient portal activation rates for newborns by 6 months of age. Our process measure was activation rates on discharge from the well-baby nursery.

Results: We observed a shift in our median patient portal activation rates from 5% prior to our QI initiative to 89% after the implementation of our interventions over five months. Rates of patient portal activation in the months immediately preceding our interventions were 0%, 5%, and 29%. This then increased to 89%, 91%, 72%, 65%, and 89% after our interventions. The overall activation rate of patient portals within 6 months of birth increased from as low as 22% before to as high as 92% after our interventions. The most common reasons for not activating the newborn's patient portal were parental refusal and plans to seek care at an outside institution.

Conclusion: By using QI methodology we were able to increase patient portal activation in the well-baby nursery. Further studies are needed to ascertain how the activation of patient portals has affected families including adherence to primary care follow-up and patient satisfaction.