

Results from HEALTHeLINK study show decreases in patient readmissions and emergency visits through physician practice integration of health information exchange

*Practices also realized that patient wait times in offices decreased up to 40 minutes*

**BUFFALO, NY, February 17, 2020** – A recent study conducted by HEALTHeLINK in cooperation with a researcher at University of Connecticut and Brookings Institution’s Center for Technology Innovation, demonstrates that provider offices effectively utilizing health information exchange (HIE) technology can help save their patients and the greater health care community both time and money. The results of the study of integrating HIE into workflow practice were published in the January 2020 Information Systems Frontiers which according to its website “examines new research and development at the interface of information systems and information technology from analytical, behavioral, and technological perspectives.”

The study examined whether integration of HIE services into medical practices’ workflow would have an impact on emergency department (ED) visits and unplanned 30-day readmission amongst patients who were treated at the practice. When practices were trained on how to efficiently utilize and integrate the HIE into their daily workflow, the pilot concluded that the rate of unplanned hospital readmissions was reduced 10.2% and the rate of ED visits was reduced 13.3%.

“The study demonstrates that HIE can significantly enhance patient care if incorporated into practice workflow,” said study author Niam Yaraghi, an assistant professor of Operations and Information Management at the University of Connecticut’s School of Business and a non-resident fellow in the Brookings Institution’s Center for Technology Innovation. Yaraghi’s research is focused on the economics of health information technologies.

Yaraghi went on to say that, “The ability of a provider office having immediate access to review a hospital discharge summary or the results of a recent test can result in fewer redundancies and better medical decisions for the patient and naturally less time that patient has to wait in the reception area, all of which lead to costs savings in the health system.”

Prior to the start of the pilot study, HEALTHeLINK first shadowed several practices to observe current workflows and gain insight into how they were currently gathering clinical information and potential ways HIE utilization, especially notifications, could save time in obtaining relevant patient records and test results. This resulted in the development and implementation of a training program at the pilot practices.

“This is now the fourth study conducted by HEALTHeLINK that demonstrates greater efficiency in the health care setting, better care for patients and the overall cost savings through the region’s HIE and another example of how HEALTHeLINK is working when utilized by providers,” said Dan Porreca, executive director, HEALTHeLINK. “In addition to utilizing HIE to reduce unplanned hospital readmissions and ED visits, participating study practices also reported to us increased ease of obtaining patient information and proactively supporting office visits. By accessing patient test results and records in advance, the practices saved up to seven hours a

week in chart preparation and pre-visit planning and experienced a reduction of up to 40 minutes in patient cycle time.”

As a result of this study, HEALTHeLINK has developed a practice workflow toolkit to assist practices with increased integration of HIE into their office workflow.

“This study illustrates that in order for providers and practices to fully realize the significant impact and value HIE can have on patient care, it needs to be properly incorporated into their office workflow,” concluded Porreca. “As part of the Statewide Health Information for New York (SHIN-NY), the value HIE organizations like HEALTHeLINK provide is enhanced with the ability to connect providers and their patients’ data from across the state. If not being used properly, HIE and HEALTHeLINK can’t achieve its full potential in improving the quality and efficiency of care.”

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**About HEALTHeLINK:** HEALTHeLINK is a collaboration among hospitals, physicians, health plans and other health care providers in the eight counties of western New York State to securely exchange clinical information to improve the quality of care, enhance patient safety and mitigate health care costs. HEALTHeLINK is a Qualified Entity of the Statewide Health Information Network for New York (SHIN-NY), which enables providers to access their patients’ data from across the state. HEALTHeLINK is also a founding member of the Strategic Health Information Exchange Collaborative (SHIEC), the national trade association of health information exchanges. Providers and patients can visit [wnyhealthelink.com](http://wnyhealthelink.com) or @HEALTHeLINK on both Facebook and Twitter for more information.