

# **21st Century Cures Act: Patient Perceptions on Open Information Sharing in Vermont Primary Care Clinics**

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# Disclosures

- None.



# Objectives

(1) Define the purpose of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act

(2) Identify three positive themes related to the use of shared notes

(3) Identify three ways the use of shared notes can be improved



# Setting

- University of Vermont Health Network (UVMHN)
  - Integrated academic health system serving more than one million residents across Vermont and Northern New York
  - Six hospitals plus a home health and hospice provider
- Primary care clinics
  - Four family medicine
  - Four adult primary care
- EHR
  - Epic and MyChart





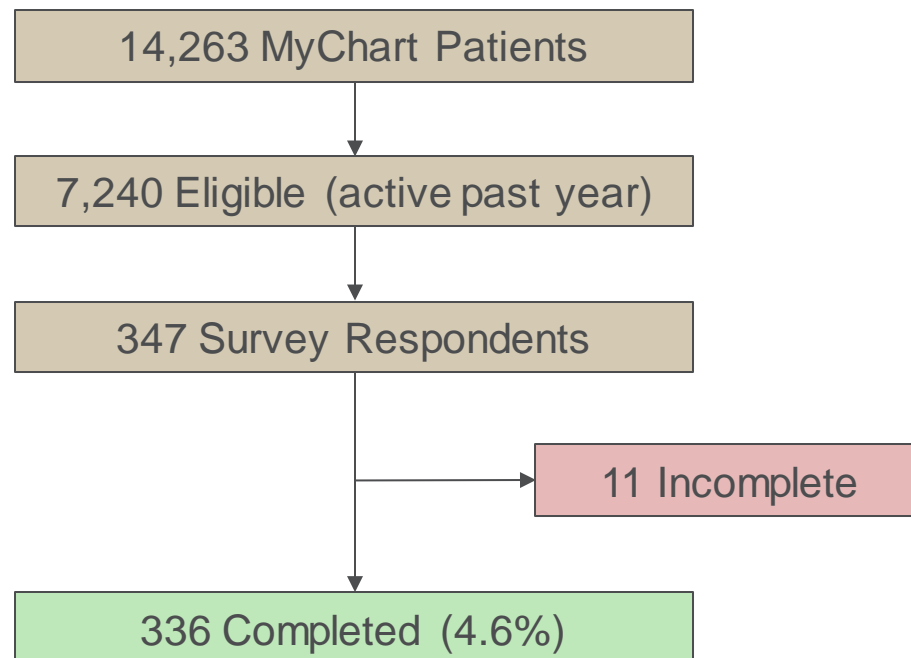
# Background

- The Cures Act requires that all patients' progress notes, lab testing results, and radiology/pathology reports be immediately released to their electronic health record portals
- It aims to:
  - Increase choice and access for patients and providers
  - Improve patient engagement and health outcomes
  - Ease regulatory burdens associated with use of EHR systems
- The University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMMC) adopted the initiative of 'open notes' in June 2017
- Our study sought to investigate patient perspectives relating to various aspects of shared notes within the patient portal
  - Clinicians often cite patient worry, confusion, and stress as reasons why patients should not have access to shared notes



# Methods

- Eligible patients had active MyChart accounts, and had both logged into their portal and attended at least one in-office or telehealth visit within one year prior to the study





# Results

## Making visit notes available to patients on MyChart is a good idea

Response	Percent of Respondents
Strongly disagree	6%
Disagree	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%
Agree	19%
Strongly agree	71%

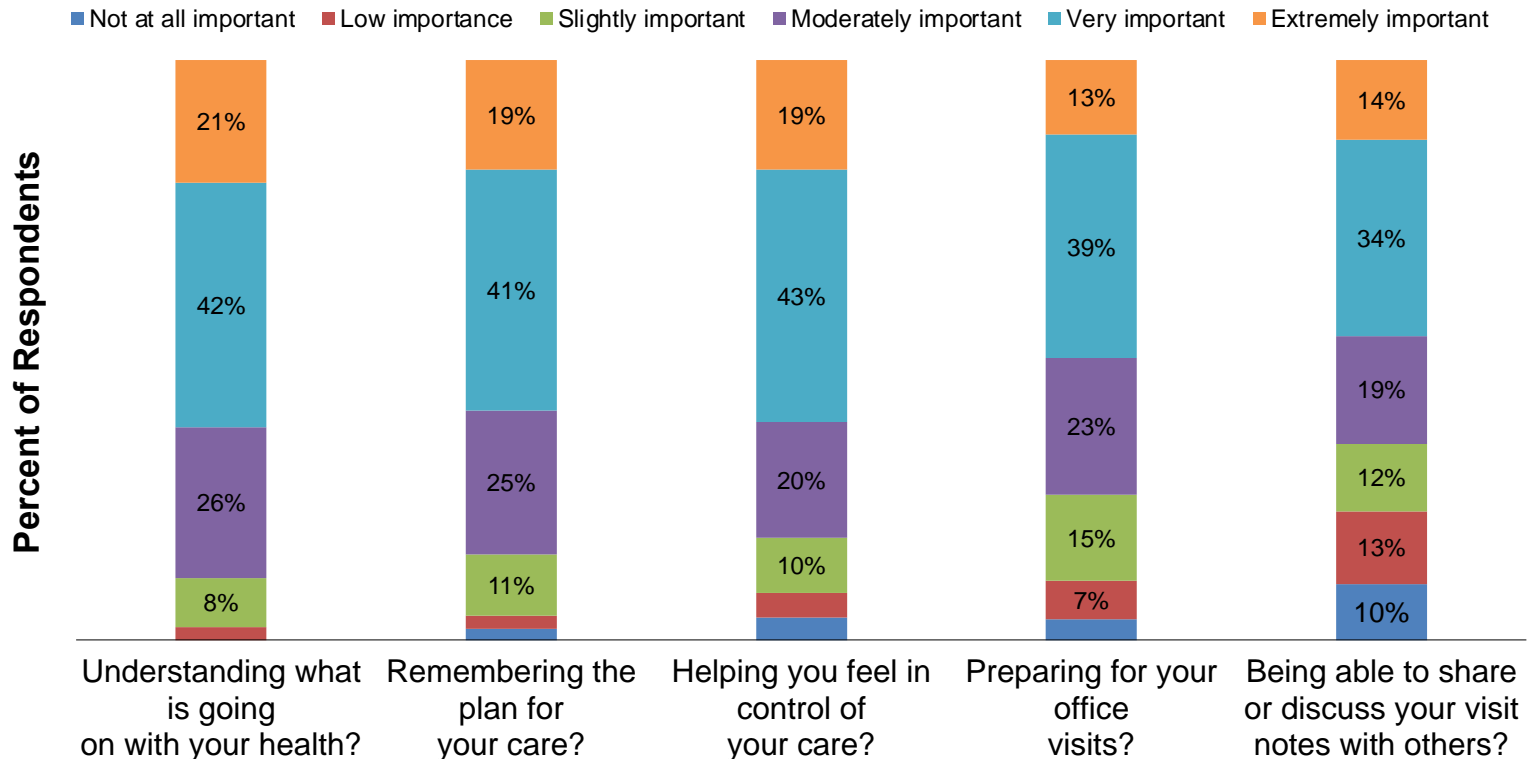
## How easy is it for you to find your visit note(s) on MyChart?

Response	Percent of Respondents
Very difficult	0%
Difficult	4%
Not too difficult	20%
Easy	43%
Very easy	33%



# Results cont.

## “How important is reading your visit note in...”



*\*Percentages less than 5% not labeled*



# Results cont.

In the past 12 months..	Yes	No	Don't know
Did you <u>mention</u> to any provider that you had read the visit note they wrote on MyChart?	25%	57%	18%
Did any provider <u>encourage you</u> to read their visit notes?	26%	52%	22%

More or less <u>worried</u> after reading notes?	
Less worried	22%
No change	65%
More worried	2%
I was never worried	10%



# Positive Themes

Open communication  
and two-way access

*“An open line of communication is priceless.”*

Independence

*“I find it extremely helpful to [have] control over my own care and options.”*

Preferred form of  
communication

*“It is really a primary tool for me to communicate with my care providers.”*



# Negative Themes

Provider use is inconsistent

*"I wish my various providers would read the notes as much as I do."*

Quicker access to physicians

*"48 hours waiting for a response is reasonable. More than that makes me feel like 'what's the point?'"*

Increase awareness of notes availability

*"Honestly - I had completely forgotten about the notes until this survey...a post-visit reminder would be helpful."*



# Discussion

- Provider concerns about patient stress may be miscalculated or overstated
  - Over 90% believe shared notes is a “good idea”
  - Only 2% “more worried” due to shared notes
- Patients appear to benefit meaningfully from shared notes
  - Increased engagement with and understanding of their health
  - Involvement with care plans
  - Communication with their providers
- Efforts directed toward provider-to-patient empowerment and patient education may improve usage of shared notes
  - About 3% of all respondents did not access their notes specifically because they were unaware notes were available



# Considerations and Limitations

- Response rate
  - Potential non-response bias
- Scope of survey
  - Limited to primary care and family medicine
- Self-selection
  - Most energized (positively or negatively) about shared notes



# Future Directions

- MyChart access for ESL speakers
- Serious diagnoses
- Errors and the process of correction
- Feelings of offense or judgment



# A Parting Thought

“I consider my doctor and other health providers and myself as a team. [They] provide me with their professional opinions and advice. In conjunction with them, [I] make the final decision as to any treatments or medicines. And they respect my informed decision. I take responsibility for my health. We are a **GREAT** team!!!”



# References

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Thank you!

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