User Experience Case Study:

eReferral Solution

The introduction of an eReferral process is having a positive impact on providers' experiences, enabling clinicians to effectively communicate, and securely process referrals promptly while maintaining work productivity.

Background

The traditional paper-based process typically used in the primary care / specialty care referral system is linked to inadequate communication between PCPs and specialists. This is primarily due to frequent incidences of specialists receiving incomplete referrals, lacking the information required to successfully process the forms (1). Moreover, these forms are sometimes difficult to interpret or track, and can easily get lost (1,2). In addition, specialists can sometimes miss communicating findings from the patients' visits back to the referring physician (1). Evidence has shown that Health Information Technology is a reliable, secure method that has the potential to improve the referral process (3). However, for physicians to adopt digital tools in their workplace, they require that the technology fits within their existing system and securely supports efficiency of the workflow (4).

Findings from a 2007-2008 survey assessing the impact of integrating the eReferral system in the electronic health record in San Francisco General Hospital showed a high satisfaction of the system among PCPs. About 72% of PCPs thought that eReferral improved care, 73% felt it enhanced pre-visit work-ups, and the majority (89%) believed it made it easier to track referrals. For clinics, median wait time dramatically decreased for non-urgent visits within the first six months of system introduction (5).

According to a qualitative study conducted in California, clinicians supported the eReferral system with a positive opinion on the ease of implementation, use of the system and convenience of the communication between health care providers (HCPs) (1).

"

Easy to use— eReferral supports us!

"

Primary Care eReferral User

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Knowing that documents have been received and the referral is in progress is important to us (physicians and patients) and all our staff

"

Primary Care eReferral User

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Benefits

The Ocean eReferral solution was officially launched in the WWLHIN in August 2017. The goal was to improve communication between HCPs by giving them the ability to send and receive complete referral forms that are easy to track through a secure electronic platform which is integrated into their EMR.

In December 2017, an invitation from the eReferral solution was sent to all users of the system to participate in a post-implementation satisfaction survey requesting feedback on their experience with the system. The response rate was 35%. More than two-thirds of the participants (71%) were satisfied with the eReferral system. A large majority of the participants (81%) reported that they would recommend the eReferral solution.

When participants were asked about their experience of using the eReferral solution and the potential or realized benefits of adopting it, 82.4% found it reliable and 93.8% believed it is easy to use. Moreover, the majority of users (93.8%) believed it had improved communication with HCPs and more than three-quarters of participants (76.5%) thought that, compared to the regular paper-fax based referral, the eReferral system increased workflow efficiency and helped physicians perform their work well. **Slightly less than two-thirds of users (64%) felt the system helped increase the number of complete referrals and 63% agreed it increased timely communication with patients regarding the status of their referral. Moreover, 73% agreed that the system improved patients' satisfaction with care.**

81%
would recommend the eReferral system

Users' opinion of eReferral process

Provides privacy of information	Easy to use	Better communication	Reliable	Helps me perform my work
94.1	93.8	93.8	82.4	76.5

71%
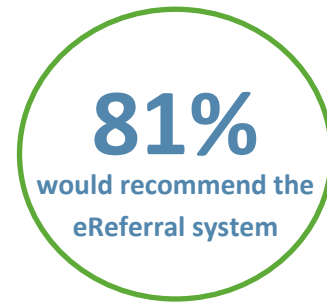were satisfied with the eReferral system

About the SCA Program

The System Coordinated Access (SCA) Program was originally initiated to support the development and adoption of electronic referral in the Waterloo Wellington region. As a result of an investment by the Ontario Government, the program has now expanded to support the implementation of eReferral to four additional LHINs.
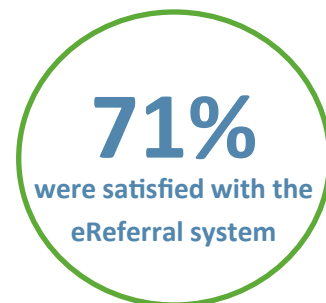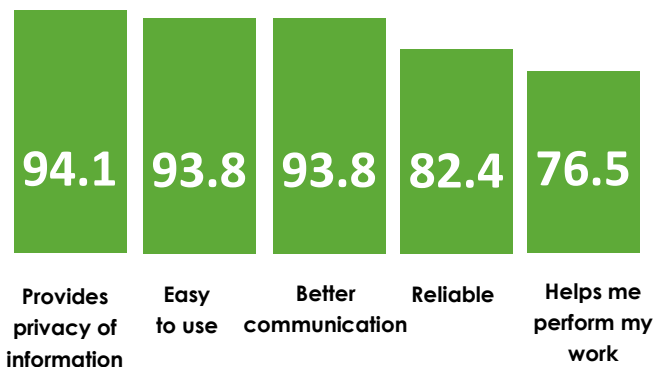
eReferral replaces paper-based faxes with electronic referral requests. Using integrated electronic medical records (EMRs), referrals are sent, tracked and updated right from the patient's electronic chart. The SCA Program team provides hands-on training and solution set up, free of charge.

Works Cited

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Contact

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