

July 2009



Please add newsletters@npdinc.com to your address book to ensure future delivery of NorthPoint Domain newsletters to your inbox (not bulk or junk folders).

NorthPoint Domain Inc.
One Joy Street
Boston, MA
02108-1403 USA

(800) 603-1420

www.northpointdomain.com
memberservices@npdinc.com

Provider Attitudes Affect Older Patients' Enthusiasm Toward Email

Patient enthusiasm was high, especially among minorities and men

Older patients are enthusiastic about the option of using email to communicate with their physicians, according to a study published in a recent issue of the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. Those who rated their interactions with the physician not as highly but who judged their physician to have good communication skills showed the most interest in electronic exchanges.

The ever-increasing pervasiveness of the Internet and email offers the doctor-patient relationship another context within which to grow. Some research had suggested it to be an untapped resource with great potential for positive impact, but data were limited. The study authors thus sought to investigate, and they chose elderly patients as the study population because this

group is at high risk for multiple comorbidities and poor communication with the physician. Older people's concerns are also more likely to be overlooked, or not addressed adequately for their peace of mind — providing a good opportunity for electronic communication to meet unmet needs.

Patients who rated their interactions with the physician not as highly but who judged their physician to have good communication skills showed the most interest in electronic exchanges.

The authors used data collected in 2003 from two large randomized controlled trials in southern California. A final, pooled sample of 4,059 patients older than age 65 years, along with their 181 physicians, was interviewed and included. Only 1.3 percent of patients reported communicating via email with their providers, but nearly half (49.3 percent) indicated an enthusiastic interest in doing so. With each year increase in age, the odds of being enthusiastic decreased by approximately 0.97.

continued on page 2

... Provider Attitudes Affect Older Patients' Enthusiasm ...
continued from page 1

African Americans, Hispanics, and men were more enthusiastic than whites and women, and those patients who did not use email in general were less likely to show interest. One possible explanation cited in the study is that minorities and men are less likely to be vocal during the office visit, and may therefore benefit more from external support.

Physician attitude and communication skills affected patient opinion as well: patients whose doctors were enthusiastic, good communicators, and who usually — but not always — allowed enough time to cover issues showed the most interest. Physicians themselves were 4.96 times more likely to express interest in electronic communication if they were somewhat or very dissatis-

fied with their current work situation, versus very satisfied. The authors surmise dissatisfaction may lead to a desire to try other methods of communication.

The study authors conclude that email and Internet use will only grow and could provide a basis for reimbursement-related policy changes. They add that “significant opportunities exist to use electronic tools to overcome some communication barriers affecting older patients.”

Source: Singh H, Fox SA, Petersen NJ, et al. 2009. Older patients' enthusiasm to use electronic mail to communicate with their physicians: cross-sectional survey. *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 11(2):e18.

Exercise Training Increases CRT Benefits

Exercise training provides added benefits after device implantation

Patients can gain improvements in exercise capacity, hemodynamic measures, and quality of life (QOL) following cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT). A study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that exercise training can provide further improvements, allowing maximal benefit after CRT.

Chronic heart failure is increasingly common, the authors write. CRT leads to improved exercise capacity, functional class, peak oxygen consumption, hemodynamic measures, and QOL scores. These benefits come mainly through improved central cardiovascular function, which leads to reverse remodeling with a reduction in the left ventricular size and an improvement in the ejection fraction. In addition, recent evidence has shown that exercise training for chronic heart failure patients is safe and can boost exercise capacity, peak oxygen consumption,

and QOL. With the current study, the authors sought to investigate the combination of exercise training and CRT.

The authors recruited 50 patients in New York Heart Association (NYHA) functional class III to IV who were assessed 3 and 6 months after CRT. Functional class and QOL scores were recorded, and exercise tests were performed with hemodynamic

The addition of exercise training significantly enhances the benefits seen by improving both the central cardiac function and the peripheral skeletal muscle function.

measurements. In addition, peak lower limb skeletal muscle torque was measured during extension and participants underwent echocardiography at each visit. At 3 months, 25 patients were randomly assigned to an exercise training group, and 25 to a control group.

The exercise group underwent a 12-week physician-supervised exercise program of 3 visits per week for 30 minutes. The sessions included walking 10 minutes on a treadmill, cycling for 10 minutes, and an additional 10 minutes of

continued on page 4

... Exercise Training Increases CRT Benefits ...
continued from page 3

walking. Intensity increased from 80 percent of peak heart rate in the first month to 90 percent in the final month. Three months after CRT implantation, the authors observed significant improvements in functional, hemodynamic, and echocardiographic measures. After randomization, however, patients in the exercise arm had further improvements in NYHA functional class, exercise hemodynamic measures, as well as QOL scores as compared with the control group. In addition, the authors also observed significant in-group improvements in peak skeletal muscle function and ejection fraction that did not reach statistical significance on inter-group analysis.

The authors write, "CRT is an effective treatment for suitable patients. The addition of exercise training significantly enhances the benefits seen by improving both the central cardiac function and the peripheral skeletal muscle function. Exercise training would provide only a small additional cost to the overall cost of CRT, and therefore we feel that it would be justified to offer this to all patients after CRT."

Source: Patwala AY, Woods PR, Sharp L, et al. 2009. Maximizing patient benefit from cardiac resynchronization therapy with the addition of structured exercise training. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* 53:2332-2339.

Cardiology Domain Article Updates

The following Patient Literacy Center articles were recently updated and reviewed by the Cardiology Domain Medical Advisory Board. The updated articles have been added to the websites of subscribers to the Cardiology Domain Patient Literacy Center. For information about becoming a Patient Literacy Center Subscriber, contact your Member Services Advisor at (800) 603-1420.

- Arrhythmia Monitoring
- Antithrombotic Therapy
- Radiofrequency Ablation
- Sleep Apnea

Hot Topic Highlights

Cardiology Domain recently posted the following Hot Topics to your website:

Older Men with Sleep Disorders at Increased Risk for Arrhythmias

Older men who have sleep-related breathing problems (sleep-disordered breathing or SDB) may be at increased risk for certain heart rhythm problems, according to the results of a study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. The study of 2,911 men ages 65 years and older found that men with obstructive sleep apnea were more likely to experience complex ventricular ectopy, and men with central sleep apnea were more likely to have atrial fibrillation.

Source:

Mehra R, Stone KL, Varosy PD, et al. 2009. Nocturnal arrhythmias across a spectrum of obstructive and central sleep-disordered breathing in older men. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 169(12):1147-1155.

Lack of Sleep Can Increase Blood Pressure

Middle-aged adults who don't get enough sleep are at increased risk for developing hypertension (high blood pressure), according to a study published in the June 8, 2009 issue of the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. One of the first to measure sleep duration among middle-age adults, the study found that each hour of missed sleep increased the risk of high blood pressure significantly. The study of 578 white and African American men and women found that people who didn't sleep enough had a 37 percent increased risk of developing hypertension. Each hour of reduced sleep time increased a person's risk for high blood pressure by 37 percent.

Source:

Knutson KL, Van Cauter E, Rathouz PJ, et al. 2009. Association between sleep and blood pressure in midlife. The CARDIA sleep study. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 169(11):1055-1061.