

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

continued on page 2

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

enthusiastic interest in doing so. With each year increase in age, the odds of being enthusiastic decreased by approximately 0.97. 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 dissatisfied 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.

Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms Linked to Metabolic Syndrome

Study finds increased risk even with mild symptoms

Men with mild to severe lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) are more likely to have the metabolic syndrome, according to a study published in the August 2009 issue of *The Journal of Urology*.

Mounting evidence suggests associations between LUTS and major chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes. The authors found little evidence regarding the association of LUTS with the metabolic syndrome (MetS), however, and sought to investigate this possible association as well as determine the relationship between individual symptoms.

The researchers analyzed the records of 1,899 men ages 30 to 79 years who had provided blood samples while participating in the Boston Area Community Health Survey. LUTS was defined by the American Urological Association symptom index (voiding [incom-

plete emptying, weak stream, intermittency, and straining] and storage [frequency, urgency, and nocturia]). MetS was defined based on the Adult Treatment Panel III guidelines. Men with mild to severe LUTS were 1.68 times more likely to have MetS. The authors found a statistically significant association between

MetS and a voiding symptom score of 5 or more, but not for a storage symptom score of 4 or more. Men— primarily men younger than 60 years — even with mild symptoms, mainly incom-

plete emptying, intermittency, and nocturia, were more likely to have MetS.

The authors note that the study has limitations, and write that “Further research is needed to understand the common pathophysiology of LUTS and MetS, especially longitudinal studies to determine a temporal sequence and investigation of this association in women as a rela-

Further research is needed to understand the common pathophysiology of LUTS and MetS.

continued on page 4

... Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms Linked to Metabolic Syndrome ...
continued from page 3

tionship between chronic illnesses and LUTS has been reported previously in men and women. Additional studies are needed to explore the treatment impact and correlation of comorbid conditions and symptoms associated with the individual components of MetS," they conclude.

Source: Kupelian V, McVary KT, Kaplan SA, et al. 2009. Association of lower urinary tract symptoms and the metabolic syndrome: results from the Boston Area Community Health Survey. *The Journal of Urology* 182:616-625.

Urology Domain Article Updates

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

- Enuresis
- Incontinence
- Ureteral Stones

Hot Topic Highlights

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

Erectile Dysfunction Influenced by Waist Size and Activity Level

Men who don't exercise regularly and accumulate excess weight around their midsections increase their chances of developing erectile dysfunction (ED), according to a study published in the July 2009 issue of the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. The study found that this increased risk was independent of a man's overall body composition. The study of 3,491 men found that after accounting for other causes, men with either a high waist circumference (WC) or body mass index (BMI) had an approximately 50 percent higher chance of having ED than men with a low WC or normal BMI. Moderately active or inactive men had an approximately 40 to 60 percent greater chance of having ED compared with active men.

Source:

Janiszewski PM, Janssen I, Ross R. 2009. Abdominal obesity and physical inactivity are associated with erectile dysfunction independent of body mass index. *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 6:1990-1998.

Treating Interstitial Cystitis Effectively Improves Quality of Life

Successful treatment of interstitial cystitis may reduce sleep disturbances and thus improve patient quality of life, according to a study published in the June 2009 issue of *The Journal of Urology*. Physical health — and to a smaller extent, mental health — improved. The authors of the current study investigated the relationship between treating IC with pentosan polysulfate sodium, or Elmiron, sleep disturbances, and health-related quality of life. Forty-two percent saw a 30 percent or greater reduction in symptoms after approximately 8 weeks of treatment; and responders had significant improvements in sleep scores and showed significant improvement in quality of life measures, physically, and to a lesser extent, mentally.

Source:

Nickel JC, Payne CK, Forrest J, et al. 2009. The relationship among symptoms, sleep disturbances and quality of life in patients with interstitial cystitis. *The Journal of Urology* 181:2555-2561.