Nurse and Physician Perspectives on Patients With Cancer Having Online Access to Their Laboratory Results

Elizabeth S. Rodriguez, DNP, RN, OCN®, Bridgette Thom, MS, and Susan M. Schneider, PhD, RN, AOCN®, FAAN

Patient portals are Web-based applications that allow patients to communicate with their providers, pay hospital bills, view appointment information, download patient education materials, and review information from the electronic medical record (EMR) (Sorensen, Shaw, & Casey, 2009). The patient portal industry has expanded significantly since 2000 (Businger et al., 2007; Masys, Baker, Butros, & Cowles, 2002; Sorensen et al., 2009; Wald et al., 2007; Weingart, Rind, Tofias, & Sands, 2006). Growing interest exists in providing patients with online access to their EMR, specifically laboratory results, as a means for engaging patients in their health care and improving patient satisfaction (Businger et al., 2007; Ralston, Hereford, & Carrell, 2006; Wald et al., 2007; Wiljer et al., 2006).

Background

Support exists demonstrating patient desire for online access to EMRs (Businger et al., 2007; Hassol et al., 2004; Masys et al., 2002; Ralston et al., 2006; Wald et al., 2007; Weingart et al., 2006). For those healthcare providers using patient portals, studies suggest that patient satisfaction increases along with patient empowerment to become engaged in their own health care (Businger et al., 2007; Hassol et al., 2004; Ralston et al., 2006; Ross et al., 2005; Wald et al., 2007).

In the oncology population, opportunities for empowerment can improve the quality of care. For example, Masys et al. (2002) reported that one patient in their study realized the laboratory had done the wrong test and was able to have it corrected. In addition, potential exists for improved patient-physician communication (Businger et al., 2007; Siteman et al., 2006).

Despite the interest among patients, physician concerns for causing patients anxiety, as well as increasing their own workload, remain barriers to implementing access to laboratory results on patient portals (Hassol...