

Record Access

myRecord: Enabling patients to access their medical records online

As part of the Health Foundation's 'Closing the Gap through Changing Relationships', we are working with Lewisham GP practices and patients to make online record access the norm.

What we've been up to

We knew that RA brings benefits to people and empowers them with information that helps them self-manage conditions and improve quality of care. But we also knew that practices had some concerns (largely unfounded) about records access - fears of patients complaining if they found out unexpected information or about the extra workload. Our project is all about tackling these concerns, embedding RA use and ensuring patients and practices reap the potential benefits.

The last few months have seen huge progress, primarily in the following areas:

- Getting practices to offer records access to their patients
- Understanding what helps and gets in the way of patients using the system
- Making things simpler for practices to implement the system
- Making it easier for patients to register and log on

Working with patients -

We've been working with Diabetes UK finding out what people with diabetes think about records access. During focus groups, people told us it can help them significantly in managing their own condition through having access to up to date information. We are now targeting our work on people with long term conditions (firstly diabetes) where the benefits of RA will be most felt. Patients

have also told us that it can be hard to register and log on to their online records. We have made the process easier and developed user-friendly patient information and enrolment forms.

Working with practices and staff -

We have now supported 25 practices in Lewisham to switch on RA and are well on the way to our target of 75% switched on across the Borough. We are also busy building a business case for RA and working alongside nurse practitioners who refer people with diabetes to RA. We have also developed recommendations for system providers to improve the system. This will turn into a blueprint for all developers who want to enable patients to access records online.

Impact -

Many patients signing up seem motivated by the benefits of making online appointments and ordering repeat prescriptions online. More 'committed' patients (with LTCs usually) seem motivated to go the next step to access their own records. We think these people are the ones we need to target so they can reap the benefits of RA. And already we are seeing the impact of more people accessing their records. 46% of patients registered for RA locally report feeling 'more confident about their health' and 39% of respondents stated that, as a direct result they now feel 'more able to help themselves'. See box section.



What people say

My main motivation was to be able to access my records... Although I had technical issues the first time I tried to use the system, I have found the system to be great!

I have been able to look at my test results and my records without making any calls to the surgery. I do find the system useful

I wanted to better manage my health. Through record access, as someone who suffers from multiple health problems, I can see if I could have picked up certain conditions or symptoms earlier after getting record access, I had managed to inform the practice about discrepancies of my records and that had been fixed since

Through immediately accessing my test results online I need not worry unnecessarily and bother the practice about it

Yes, it's good progress, well done - makes life easier!

Patients at the heart of the project

- Our forthcoming website will carry latest news, blogs and patient stories, plus useful resources about the why and how of RA
- We have run several patient focus groups with Diabetes UK on what helps and gets in the way of RA use
- We are developing targeted patient information materials for people with particular long-term conditions
- We are working with the local LINK, Patient Participation Groups, Voluntary organisations and Diabetes UK to promote the benefits of RA, encourage patients to ask for RA and support people to use it
- We will be developing a series of video stories (made by and for patients) that show the benefits of RA
- We will be organising local events later in the year for patients, carers and the public about RA and piggy-backing on local events.
- We support local volunteer 'champions' to promote and support RA

Next steps

We need to make as many practices as possible more 'RA-friendly'. This means intensifying efforts in our two test bed sites (St Johns and Hilly Fields) to actively promote RA and embed a culture of RA throughout the organisation. This includes building the capacity of receptionists and staff to address queries.

We are now working with GPs and specialist nurses in some practices so that they can 'refer' patients to, or 'prescribe' RA. Our recent learning shows this to be crucial to uptake of RA.

Across Lewisham, we will make sure all practices have access to online resources that can help them do more to enable RA for their patients. But we will also focus on practices where we can work enable them to move from 'passively' offering RA (e.g. posters on the wall) to more active efforts (e.g. clinicians and staff encouraging use).

We are also talking with key decision-makers, such as the Commissioners, professional groups and the local authority to build a more positive climate for RA use and we will be holding events on records access in the near future....

Watch this space!

For more guidance please visit: Clinicians

www.rcgp.org.uk/pdf/Health_Informatics_Enabling_Patient_Access.pdf

Snap shot - What we are trying to do

60% of GP practices across England can offer 24-hour secure online access to their own patient records, but so far only a small fraction have seized the opportunity to provide this service.

Practices in Lewisham are ahead of the game with more practices signed up here than in any other UK area. We are working in Lewisham to support the uptake of this exciting development and are offering a facilitation service and on-site support to GP practices in the area. We aim to have 75% of practices up and running on the system by summer 2012.

We are also conducting research into how online access to medical records changes the relationship between patient and practitioner. This project will enable insight into how best to support patients and practices to make best use of record access in order to change relationships between patients and staff.

Get in touch

We are always keen to talk to new patients and practices.

If you have any feedback, wish to get involved or want more details, please contact anna.burns@nhs.net