



COVID-19 pandemic pushes patient portal to forefront of personal health care management

Green Bay, Wis. – The COVID-19 pandemic is causing a shift in many aspects of daily life, including the ways in which many are choosing to manage their health care.

Patient portals, utilized by health care systems across the country, provide patients access to their health information online, 24/7. Patients can use these secure portals to message their doctor, request prescription refills, view lab results, schedule appointments, make payments and more. Prevea Health has seen a significant increase in the use of its patient portal, *MyPrevea*, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Patient portals put the ability to manage your health care right at your fingertips,” said Amber Allen, Executive Director of Primary Care, Quality and Innovation at Prevea Health. “While convenient, they haven’t necessarily been a flashpoint of consumer demand. This is changing however, as the COVID-19 pandemic is steering more patients toward the use of these portals and reminding us all how easy they make it to manage our personal health.”

When comparing the average number of *MyPrevea* users between March 2019 and July 2019 to the average number of *MyPrevea* users between March 2020 and July 2020, the ***data shows a nearly 20% increase in the number of MyPrevea users.*** Allen cites three possible reasons for an increase in the use of patient portals:

1. Patient portals offer a sense of security and convenience in a time of uncertainty.

Earlier in the pandemic and in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19 throughout communities, health systems encouraged patients who did not feel safe leaving their homes, and/or with non-emergency health conditions, to use patient portals, virtual care and telehealth options for health care guidance.

“As the pandemic evolved and it was safe to welcome all of our patients back for in-person visits, many patients did in fact return,” said Allen. “However, they continued to use the patient portal for other needs, such as messaging their doctor, as their use of it earlier in the pandemic allowed them to become more familiar with its capabilities. There are also some people who are still not comfortable with in-person visits during this time, so having access to the patient portal, as well as our virtual care and telehealth options allows them to get the care they need while still in the comfort of home.”

Studies also show the regular use of patient portals by those with complex conditions, such as diabetes, can reduce hospital stays and trips to the emergency room.

2. Staying home, physically distancing is increasing internet and technology use.

As efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 include staying home when possible and practicing physical distancing, more people are turning to the internet more frequently to connect with family and friends and meet daily living needs. This may include those who previously were unfamiliar or uncomfortable with internet and technology use.

“The COVID-19 pandemic made us all become suddenly reliant on being able to work, learn and even shop from home with the use of technology,” said Allen. “When you have access to a patient portal, such as *MyPrevea*, you can also manage your health care from home and more people are now realizing how convenient that really is.”

3. The need for COVID-19 testing.

The ability to test for COVID-19 plays a critical role in helping to stop the spread of the virus. Earlier in the pandemic, as Prevea Health prepared to offer free COVID-19 testing in more than dozen communities across Eastern and Western Wisconsin, it needed a reliable system to virtually assess patients for COVID-19 symptoms, offer them testing appointment times and locations, and ensure they could access their test results in a timely manner.

“We quickly discovered that our existing patient portal was the perfect option for this,” said Allen. “We worked carefully with our IT department to add to *MyPrevea* all of the new tools needed to help our patients navigate the COVID-19 testing process. Since May 2020, when we first began offering free COVID-19 testing in our communities, we have seen an increase of nearly 22,000 new *MyPrevea* users. It is our hope that patients who are utilizing *MyPrevea* for COVID-19 testing also realize the benefits of using a patient portal long-term, for other future health care management needs.”

For more information about MyPrevea, please visit www.myprevea.com. MyPrevea can also be downloaded as an app on a smartphone or other device through Apple or Google Play.

###

About Prevea Health

Founded in Green Bay, Wis. in 1996, Prevea Health is a health care organization that provides high-quality, primary and specialty health care in 80+ locations across Northern, Eastern and Western Wisconsin in clinic and hospital settings. It is partnered with six Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) hospitals across Wisconsin to provide patients a system of highly-coordinated care, close to home: HSHS St. Vincent Hospital and HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center in Green Bay; HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital in Sheboygan; HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital in Oconto Falls; HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire; and HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital in Chippewa Falls. For more information, visit www.prevea.com.