

Improving Patient Portal Triage and Quality for Enhanced User Satisfaction



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INTRODUCTION

Background

In recognition of the critical role nurses play in delivering high-quality, patient-centered care, this quality improvement initiative focuses on leveraging data to enhance both patient and provider satisfaction.

Our project utilized the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model to identify key opportunities for improving communication and clinical outcomes through optimized triage processes.

Purpose

- By analyzing staff feedback and provider input, we identified bottlenecks in digital communication (Vanderhout, et al., 2025).
 - Acute issues being inappropriately sent through patient portal.
 - Delays in care as messages sent to providers often remain unanswered until they have time either between or after seeing patients.
- Through targeted workflow adjustments, enhanced triage protocols and ongoing staff education, measurable improvements were made.
 - response times improved
 - clarity of communication- additional details obtained and used to triage to appropriate level of care
 - overall satisfaction improved
- This initiative underscores the impact of nursing leadership in digital health optimization and highlights how informed triage decisions made by clinical nurses not only improve care coordination but also strengthen the provider-patient relationship (Laukka, et al., 2020).

METHODS

Setting and Participants:

All Virtua Primary Care offices
Participants are providers and medical assistants that handle symptomatic Patient Portal messages

Methods of Data Collection

Provider and Staff Feedback:

- Surveys used to gather input on workload, message management, and triage effectiveness.
- Message Response Time Tracking:
Data extracted directly from Patient Portal to evaluate the average time from the initial message sent to triage to the time of the nurse response.
- Triage Accuracy:
Regular auditing of triaged patient portal messages to assess the clinical appropriateness, accuracy and timeliness of nurse responses
- Operational Metrics:
Quantitative data on message volume and resolution rates at the nursing level.

RESULTS

Key Findings :

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Patient Portal quality improvement initiative a multi-pronged assessment strategy was implemented to focus on both quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

Provider Feedback and Workload Impact

- Surveys among focus groups – providers / pertinent office staff showed a positive response to the perceived reduction in communication burden, improved workflow efficiency, and satisfaction with triage support.



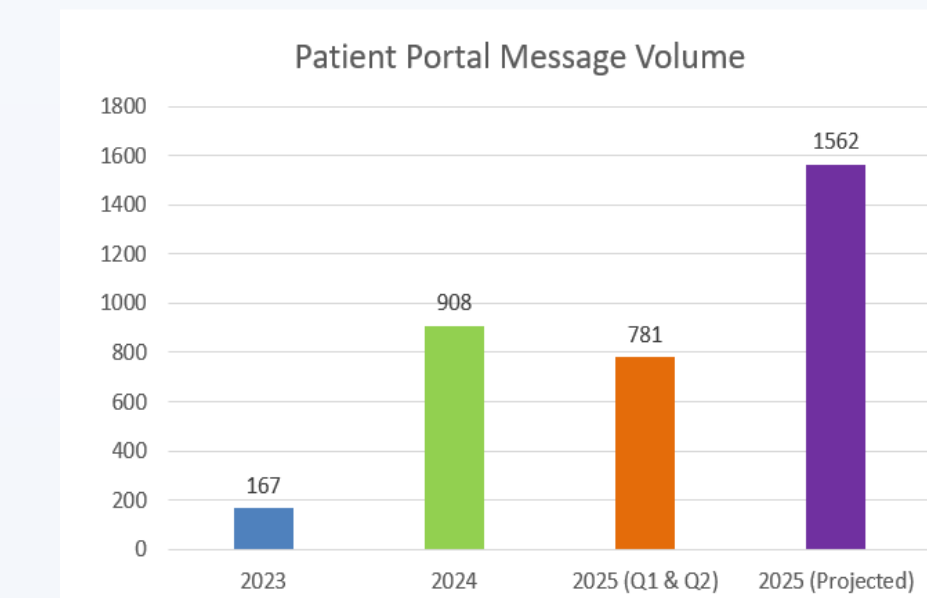
RESULTS

Operational Metrics

- Message volume before/after triage changes.
- Indicates number of messages resolved at nursing level vs escalated to providers

Message Volume Growth (2023–2025)

- 2023: 167 messages
- 2024: 908 messages
- 2025 (Q1–Q2): 781 messages
- 2025 Projected: 1562 messages



- Average response time to Patient Portal messages

Average Clinical Triage Response Time

- Average Time: 17 minutes
- Measured from time message is received to response initiation
- Reflects timely patient communication and workflow efficiency

Row Labels	Avg Resolve time (mm:ss)	Count of PAT_NAME
Patient Portal -UC Tele	53:00	1
Patient Portal - ED	14:25	41
Patient Portal -Medical Question	12:58	33
Patient Portal -Message Practice	15:55	11
Patient Portal -Message PT	17:30	12
Patient Portal-NT called patient	17:25	349
Patient Portal-NT forwarded message to practice	12:52	10
Patient Portal -SDA	16:33	103
Patient Portal-SDA Tele	17:20	35
Patient Portal -Supportive Care	22:58	32
Grand Total	17:07	627

- Involving triage nurses early ensures that patients receive timely attention and are directed to appropriate level of care.
- Reduction in unnecessary visits or follow up calls due to improved digital triage

Triage Quality Monitoring:

- Quarterly data assessed based on predefined clinical benchmarks and alignment with best practice protocols

Continuous Feedback Loop with workflow improvements:

- Quarterly review meetings with clinical and nursing leadership to discuss findings and identify areas for further improvement
- Real-time dashboards to track progress and share data transparently with frontline staff
- All triage nurses trained and accountable for patient portal messages.
- Patient portal messages hold same priority as calls in phone queue.

CONCLUSIONS

- This quality improvement project demonstrated that integrating clinical triage protocols with patient portal optimization significantly enhances both staff and provider satisfaction.
- Nurses play a pivotal role in managing digital communication efficiently, ensuring timely, accurate responses that improve care outcomes and trust in the healthcare system.
- Empowering nurses to lead digital quality initiatives reinforces their critical role in care coordination, particularly in a tech-enabled healthcare environment.
- Streamlined triage improves workflow efficiency, reduces provider burden, and elevates the patient's experience.
- Continued monitoring of data for workload impacts and ways to optimize overall workflow process.
- Future use of focus groups and surveys to monitor workload impact and obtain data on patient satisfaction.

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