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The Effect of Patient Portals on the Quality of Care of Patients

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Technology in healthcare is constantly evolving and bringing forth various technological methods to improve the care of patients. Over time, there have been many different implementation efforts in the United States to kick start technology within the healthcare system. For instance, the development of an electronic health record changed the healthcare industry in its entirety. The implementation of an EHR was not a smooth transition for every facility that chose to implement, but the more features that were presented in an EHR as well as the more incentives that were produced from Meaningful Use, there was an influx in facilities that chose to implement an EHR. With the evolution of an EHR, there came a feature known as a patient portal. A patient portal is a system that is linked to a patient's electronic health record that allows the patient twenty-four-hour access to their medical information, education, results, and communication with a physician. "Without a patient portal as an intermediary, the patient would not be able to access the data in the electronic health record" (Kruse, Bolton, & Freriks, 2015). This demonstrates the need for a patient portal so the patient can remain engaged and knowledgeable as to their course of care, but is there truly an effect of the implementation of a patient portal on the quality of care that a patient receives? Patient engagement and a high quality of care is, after all, the reason we are all in healthcare. The need for patient engagement regarding their continuum of care is very important because lost or missing information can be detrimental to at home care or communication of health to another physician. There are have been many conflicting opinions on whether a patient portal effects the quality of care in patients, but through literature research and quantitative methods of research involving the exact benefits of a patient portal, physician perspectives, patient perspectives, and patient literacy, it became clear that a patient portal has a strong impact on the quality of care that a patient receives as well as the quality of care that a physician can provide.