Demographic predictors and patterns of patient portal usage among individuals with cancer

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Background
Understanding how patients with cancer use patient portals (e.g. MyChart) is important because portals allow patients to make appointments, message providers, and check lab results. Portals allow patients with cancer to manage their cancer care. Importantly, portals have been shown to empower patients, helping them to feel more informed and in control of their cancer.

Objective
We sought to identify patients diagnosed with cancer who are at risk of being disadvantaged due to difficulty accessing a patient portal, an important health IT tool for engagement and self-management of chronic disease.

Study Design
Patterns and predictors of portal usage were assessed for adults with solid tumors diagnosed between 2015-2020. Data related to demographics, cancer diagnosis, and MyChart account usage were extracted from Electronic Health Records.

Results
We identified 5950 patients with cancer; mean age 64.4 (range 21-101), 53.5% (n=3185) female, 93.9% (n=5587) white, 71.8% (n=4271) living in urban area, and 43.6% (n=2595) Medicaid/Medicare beneficiaries. Female, white, and privately insured patients (P < .001) were more likely to have an account; individuals living in rural area were less likely (P < .001). Among those with an active account (n=3898), frequent users were younger (P < .001), white (P = .003) and privately insured (P < .001). Percentage of metastatic disease was higher in the frequent users’ group (P < .001).

Conclusions
Patients with cancer may not equally access to patient portals. More studies are necessary to better understand and address the needs of patients with cancer underserved by this technology.

References

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