

# SNI Webinar Recap: Strategies to Increase Patient Portal Utilization

On May 27, 2021, SNI hosted the webinar, *Strategies to Increase Patient Utilization*, with leaders at Riverside University Health System (RUHS). The webinar slides and recording are available [here](#). Below are key takeaways from the session.

## Strategies to Increase Patient Portal Utilization

### Identify the "Why"

Engage stakeholders to identify patient portal objectives in a way that aligns with the organization's strategic goals. At RUHS, the objectives are to **increase access to care, close care gaps in underserved populations, promote LEAN strategies, and improve patient, provider, and staff engagement.**

### Deep Dive into Barriers and Opportunities

Conduct a deep dive to understand the barriers to patient portals within clinics. After talking to staff at the Corona Community Health Center, RUHS identified the following areas of opportunities:



#### Person-based:

Emphasize provider and staff encouragement; offer tech support



#### Tool-based:

Utilize metrics and data; improve security; add new features; create training tools



#### Task-based:

Adapt rooming workflows; embed portal practices into the clinic



#### Environment-based:

Improve WiFi and signage; incorporate into daily huddles; maintain healthy competition



#### Organization-based:

Promote cultural adoption; use a pull (rather than push) mentality

*"We had this dilemma early on: Do we focus our energy on getting patients on the portal, even though there's not much functionality right now, or do we focus on building up the functionality to really roll out and refine the tools? We ended up doing both at the same time." - Melissa Taylor, Clinical Informatics Officer, RUHS*

### Use a High-Touch Approach

Invite patients to register for the portal at every step of a visit. RUHS' 4-touch approach involves asking patients about the portal during the **scheduling call**, at the **front desk**, **during the rooming process** by clinical support staff, and finally **during the visit** by the provider. RUHS worked with stakeholders, leaders, and portal champions to develop consistent and effective scripting and workflows for each staff role.

### Empower Team Members to Drive Outcomes

Train superusers and Nurse Coordinators on how to access and interpret meaningful data so that they can embed portal performance into daily huddles and the culture of clinic operations. At RUHS, clinic teams track **offer rates**, the rates at which patients are asked to register for the portal.

### Spotlight: RUHS Pediatric Clinic

RUHS' Pediatric Clinic installed computers in examination rooms with access to the portal for patients to sign up while waiting to be seen. When COVID-19 hit, the clinic leveraged telehealth visits as an incentive to sign up for the portal. Currently, clinic support staff who make appointment reminder calls have a goal to register five non-activated patients per day. As a result of these three interventions, the RUHS Pediatric Clinic increased their portal activation rates from 9% in September 2019 to almost 70% in March 2021.