



Site Overview #1

Learn how Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center implemented OpenNotes

OpenNotes at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) in Boston, MA, is an academic medical center affiliated with Harvard Medical School. It employs approximately 2,400 clinical staff, including 800 physicians and 1,200 registered nurses. BIDMC has 649 inpatient beds and offers both hospital- and community-based ambulatory care.

BIDMC first opened notes to patients of 39 volunteering primary care physicians in 2010, as part of the initial OpenNotes demonstration project. On review of the study's results, the hospital's Clinical Operations Executive Committee voted to open all clinicians' notes.

Key Features:

- Only notes signed after the OpenNotes start date are available to patients on the portal.
- Clinicians may write a "monitored" note that is blinded to the patient online.
- Clinicians can opt out with permission from their department chiefs.

Who is Sharing Notes?

- Phased roll out began in the summer of 2013 with primary care, orthopedic, and rehabilitation services. Medical subspecialties began sharing notes with patients in the fall of 2013, and surgery and surgical subspecialties joined in December 2013. Psychiatry and social work began piloting OpenNotes in the spring of 2014. Currently, all ambulatory notes are available to patients, with plans to expand to emergency medicine and inpatient notes.
- Nearly all outpatient clinicians who sign notes in the EMR, including attending physicians, house staff and fellows, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, physical and occupational therapists, and nurses, share visit notes with patients. To date, only a few clinicians have opted out of using OpenNotes.
- All medical students (with attending physician signing notes before they become available), residents, and fellows participate in OpenNotes.

How Are Notes Being Shared?

- Patients access notes via a secure online patient portal called PatientSite.
- PatientSite currently does not have a "proxy" account access for specific populations.
- After each appointment or visit, patients receive a secure message inviting them to read their visit notes. The clinician's electronic signature triggers the message.



How Did BIDMC Introduce OpenNotes to Patients and Clinicians?

- Presentations were made by clinical champions at department meetings to educate staff on BIDMC's OpenNotes initiatives.
- Short video interviews with clinical champions and senior executives, including the CEO, were posted on the employee portal.
- Clinician OpenNotes FAQs were posted on employee portal and department chiefs also emailed the FAQs to clinicians.
- Secure email messages, including FAQs were sent to patients announcing the availability of OpenNotes.
- Educational and promotional materials about OpenNotes and the patient portal were created for BIDMC's external website and the patient portal homepage.

Lessons Learned from Implementation:

- Engaging leadership from the start makes a difference. Having the support of the CEO, the Chiefs of Medicine and Surgery, and executive-level sponsorship were critical.
- Don't underestimate the importance of institutional culture. Clinicians need to be heard and their concerns respected. Meet regularly with clinicians, be accessible to them when they have questions, and incorporate their ideas on OpenNotes implementation.
- Developing a communication strategy early helps clinicians and patients prepare for what's coming.
- Rolling OpenNotes out in stages allows room to make improvements or fix technical glitches that could turn off skeptical clinicians at the outset.
- In teaching settings, OpenNotes may pose challenges for trainee notes requiring co-signature since both providers must participate in OpenNotes for patients to view the progress note online. This needs to be addressed proactively with educational leaders.

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