



Site Overview #4

Learn how University of Washington implemented OpenNotes

OpenNotes at University of Washington Medicine

There are more than 64,000 admissions annually at University of Washington Medicine's (UW Medicine) four hospitals: Harborview Medical Center, Northwest Hospital & Medical Center, Valley Medical Center, and UW Medical Center. In addition, UW Medicine has approximately 1.3 million outpatient and emergency visits each year. UW Medical Center alone has 529 inpatient beds and 4,498 employees.

After six years of careful planning and consideration, UW Medicine opened outpatient notes to patients across departments in October 2014. A recently published paper, "Patient Portals that Allow Viewing of Clinical Notes and Hospital Discharge Summaries: The University of Washington OpenNotes Implementation Experience," describes UW's experience with implementing OpenNotes.

Key Features:

- Only notes signed after the OpenNotes start date are available to patients on the portal.
- Clinicians have the ability to "hide" individual notes from patients.
- Participation in OpenNotes is mandatory for clinicians.

Who is sharing notes?

- UW Medicine rolled out OpenNotes to all departments at once in October 2014. Emergency room notes were originally excluded, but have since been opened to patients. For additional details on the UW Medicine roll out, please see our full article.
- OpenNotes is mandatory for all clinicians (physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and nurses).
- OpenNotes is also mandatory for medical students, residents, and fellows, though their notes are not available to the patient until they are signed by an attending physician.

How Did UW Medicine Introduce OpenNotes to Patients and Clinicians?

- Presentations were made to more than a dozen committees to educate staff about OpenNotes.
- Communications materials were created, including: emails to providers; documents for staff, trainees, and faculty on internal websites; weekly medical staff and leadership email newsletters; email to medical staff detailing OpenNotes and rationale for adoption.
- UW Medicine medical director and physicians known as "IT clinician-leaders" solicited feedback to address concerns.
- Articles, newsletter, and patient and provider videos were posted to the UW Medicine website.
- Posters were displayed and distributed in exam rooms and clinic waiting areas.
- Provider and patient-focused frequently asked questions (FAQ) documents were circulated.



Lessons Learned from Implementation:

- Implementing OpenNotes with the system's EHR vendor was less problematic than expected.
- It's important to communicate widely and explicitly with patients and providers to prepare the community in advance for the transition to OpenNotes.
- It's essential to address provider and patient concerns by crafting and circulating clear policies.
- Preparing communications strategies and internal policies in advance helps a system-wide approach to implementing OpenNotes go smoothly.

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