AAP News: Study to look at whether families will use online portal to manage asthma

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The Academy is involved in a new study looking at factors that increase the likelihood families will use patient portals to manage their child's asthma symptoms and communicate with their primary care office electronically between visits.

The AAP electronic subnetwork of Pediatric Research in Office Settings (ePROS) is collaborating with The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's (CHOP) Center for Biomedical Informatics and PolicyLab to develop and test the online portal. Parents, caretakers and older youth will be able to track asthma symptoms and create goals for achieving symptom control.

Asthma is the most common chronic pediatric illness, affecting more than 7 million U.S. children. Patient portals are a promising tool to improve care and outcomes. However, the feasibility of using portals and the effect of use on clinical care across diverse pediatric practice settings have not been established.

Focusing on pediatric asthma among practices with Medicaid enrollment of more than 20%, this study will address these knowledge gaps to inform policy and practice implementation. The study will contrast varying types of online portals and track key population demographics.

Researchers anticipate the study will help policymakers understand what works for engaging patients with their electronic health records. Beyond policy implications, the project will help pediatricians understand the effect of portals on workforce issues such as staffing needed to manage these sites effectively.

"This research project also is a great opportunity for pediatric practices — big or small — to get a better sense of how they can use patient portals to engage families to track goals and outcomes," said Alexander G. Fiks, M.D., FAAP, CHOP principal investigator and PROS associate director.

Results from this project are expected to inform Stage 3 of the federal Meaningful Use program, which aims to promote the use of electronic health records to improve health care. Patient reported outcomes are anticipated to be a key component of Stage 3.

ePROS and CHOP's PolicyLab also are partnering with the AAP Child Health Informatics Center to help share policy recommendations for Stage 3 outcome measures and next steps based on study findings.

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