

What a Patient Said to Me When He Found Out I Manage a Physician Practice



He said, "I'm looking for a doctor that uses email." He said he would not use a doctor that doesn't use email because he doesn't have the time to fool around on the phone when he needs an appointment or has a question. Of course, in the practice, we don't have time to fool around on the phone either, and we'd LOVE to do everything via email, but this is something that seems hard to implement.

Why?

1. Everyone (including me) is uncertain about privacy and HIPAA when communicating with patients electronically.
2. Everyone (including me) worries about the liability issues related to electronic communication with patients. How do you index it on the EMR? Do you print it out if you're using paper charts?
3. Systems that are designed to facilitate email with patients seem limited and restricted as to specific uses like making appointments.
4. Managers worry that email opens the door to patient communication falling through the cracks when we/they are already working very hard to keep that from happening.
5. Most wonder if it is worth adopting technology early when it's expensive and untried.
6. Most wonder how many patients would really communicate electronically if given the chance.

If you could design a safe, low-risk system to communicate electronically with your patients, what would be the uses for this system? What are your communication logjams? Are you aware of or using any systems that have cracked the electronic communication conundrum?

Here's another article on doctors using email: **Why Doctors Don't Email Patients.**

Photo by Andi Berger/Dreamstime.com