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Improving linkage to care in the HIV clinic setting

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Statement of Problem: Linkage-to-Care Templates (LTCTs) within Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) patient Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) are not all being routinely completed at discharge or closed out within the allotted timeframe. The HIV clinic's current practice is to efficiently discharge patients and effectively link the patient to a primary care provider after discharge. Incomplete EMR LTCTs compromise follow-up care and result ultimately in poor patient outcomes. The purpose of this Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) project is to increase the number of completed LTCTs via use of a point-of-care reminder pop-up placed in Outlook calendar of case managers treating HIV patients aged 18 and older in a HIV health clinic.

Linkage-to-Care (LTC) is a key determinant in improving outcomes for HIV patients. Studies have demonstrated that any form of a reminder method can aid staff in adhering to the standard of practice. In particular, linkage to a primary care provider reliably improved HIV patient outcome. Studies also show that thorough LTC provided by an HIV clinic may have profound positive influence on whether patients follow through with appointments with providers and stay linked to care. Methods: A pre-intervention questionnaire was administered to the clinic staff to assess current barriers to linking patients to care. Staff education and training was conducted on setting Outlook calendar reminders for efficiently discharging (linking to care) patients. EMR audits will be conducted to track completed discharges. Significance: The results of this project can help staff efficiently link patients living with HIV to primary care, which in return improve patients' overall outcome. Linking patients to care effectively has the opportunity to decrease HIV related complications, comorbidities, and mortality.

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