

Frequency of failure to inform patients of clinically significant outpatient test results.

June 24, 2009

Casalino LP, Dunham D, Chin MH, et al. Frequency of failure to inform patients of clinically significant outpatient test results. Arch Intern Med. 2009;169(12):1123-9. doi:10.1001/archinternmed.2009.130.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/frequency-failure-inform-patients-clinically-significant-outpatient-test-results>

Failure to adequately follow up on test results is a known problem after hospital [discharge](#), in primary care [settings](#), and within computerized [systems](#). This study reviewed more than 5400 patient medical records from 19 community-based and 4 academic primary care practices and discovered a 7.1% rate of failure to inform (or document informing). Interestingly, investigators found that partial electronic health records ([EHRs](#)), with a mix of paper and electronic systems, were associated with higher failure rates than those practices without an EHR or with a complete EHR. Variations in failure rates among practices, ranging from 0% to 26%, suggest that best practices can make a significant difference. A past AHRQ WebM&M [commentary](#) discussed the impact of delayed notification for a test result following hospital discharge.