

# Re: Letter to the Editor: Inpatient Understanding of Their Care Team and Receipt of Mixed Messages: A Two-Site Cross-Sectional Study



J Gen Intern Med  
DOI: 10.1007/s11606-023-08603-8  
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Digital technology in healthcare undeniably plays an important role in patients' experience receiving care. Our paper highlighted such tools as a "digital white board" and "microblogs" as possible modalities for enhancing communication between patients and their care team. Selvakumar and colleagues also rightly discuss other bedside tools and the significance of effectively synchronizing inpatient portals with the electronic health record. Beyond this, the complexity of the inpatient environment coupled with opportunities to creatively use electronic health records provides a context ripe for application of such approaches as machine learning and natural language processing to improve patient care.

While such interventions have shown efficacy in the clinical context, much remains to be learned about how digital technologies can effectively gain and sustain traction. Organizational factors related to the hospital setting, as well as patient and clinician characteristics, can have a notable impact on the success of digital interventions aimed at enhancing inpatients' experience of their care.<sup>1</sup> Effectively promoting the use of digital tools is a necessity for success, but adoption is not a guarantee. For example, the culture of a department may reinforce certain routines and workflows which can be difficult to disrupt, thereby hindering adoption.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, while patient-facing technologies provide compelling evidence for improving patients' understanding of their care, patient satisfaction and engagement may not follow suit. Along with the implementation of tools intended to bolster patients' experience, clinician competencies geared toward patient-centered care should also be simultaneously strengthened.<sup>3</sup> However, at the same time, we must ensure that the technology does not add more burden to care team members, detracting from patient care. For example, the extra effort required to monitor digital communications

from patients can take a toll on clinicians' satisfaction, which is especially problematic in this era of burnout.<sup>4</sup> Further still, we need tools that also meet patients where they are. Patients who experience great stress during their hospitalization may need more direct attention from their clinician, rather than time spent interfacing with a digital tool.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, the only solution is for the patient to speak with and get comfort from someone on their care team.

When considering the whole, the implementation of digital technology is truly a balancing act—one that acknowledges the organizational context, while bearing in mind the needs and perspectives of both patients and clinicians. When done well, the opportunities may be boundless.

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**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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Received December 14, 2023

Accepted December 28, 2023

Published online: 08 January 2024