

Electronic test result access does not reduce test ordering

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(HealthDay) -- For office-based physicians, electronic access to patient imaging and laboratory test results does not decrease -- and may actually increase -- the number of diagnostic tests ordered, according to research published in the March issue of *Health Affairs*.

Danny McCormick, M.D., of the Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues evaluated 2008 data from the medical records for 28,741 patient visits to 1,187 office-based physicians to determine whether improved access to medical records and laboratory test results reduced the number and associated costs of [diagnostic tests](#) ordered.

Rather than reducing the number of imaging tests ordered, the researchers found that physician access to computerized imaging results

was sometimes associated with a 40 to 70 percent increased likelihood of an imaging test being ordered. Similarly, additional [laboratory tests](#) were also ordered in cases where electronic laboratory results were available. The electronic availability of test results, rather than an electronic health record itself, was found to have an impact on ordering.

"We found no evidence that office-based physicians with electronic access to imaging or blood test results order fewer imaging tests or blood tests, respectively. Indeed, at least for imaging, the reverse may be true: Facilitating physicians' access to test results through computerization may increase diagnostic image ordering," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract](#)
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