

Technology can help patients facing routine decisions

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(HealthDay)—Information technology can be harnessed to assist patients

facing routine decisions, according to a study published in the May/June issue of the *Annals of Family Medicine*.

Alex H. Krist, M.D., M.P.H., from the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, and colleagues conducted a prospective, observational study involving 12 practices with 55,453 [patients](#) using a patient portal. Participation was open for those potentially facing one of three cancer screening decisions: women aged 40 to 49 years who had not had a mammogram in two years; men aged 55 to 69 years who had not had a [prostate-specific antigen test](#) in two years; and adults aged 50 to 74 years who were overdue for [colorectal cancer screening](#).

One-fifth of the portal users faced a potential cancer screening decision in one year. The researchers found that 20.6 percent of these patients started and 7.9 percent completed the decision module. Overall, 47.2 percent of those who completed the module shared responses with their clinician. A total of 57.8 percent of those surveyed after their next office visit thought their clinician had seen their response; many reported that the module made their appointment more productive, assisted with engagement in the [decision](#), increased their knowledge, and improved communication (40.7, 47.7, 48.1, and 37.5 percent, respectively).

"Although use of technology has the potential to make visits more efficient and effective, cultural, workflow, and technical changes are needed before it could be widely disseminated," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract](#)
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