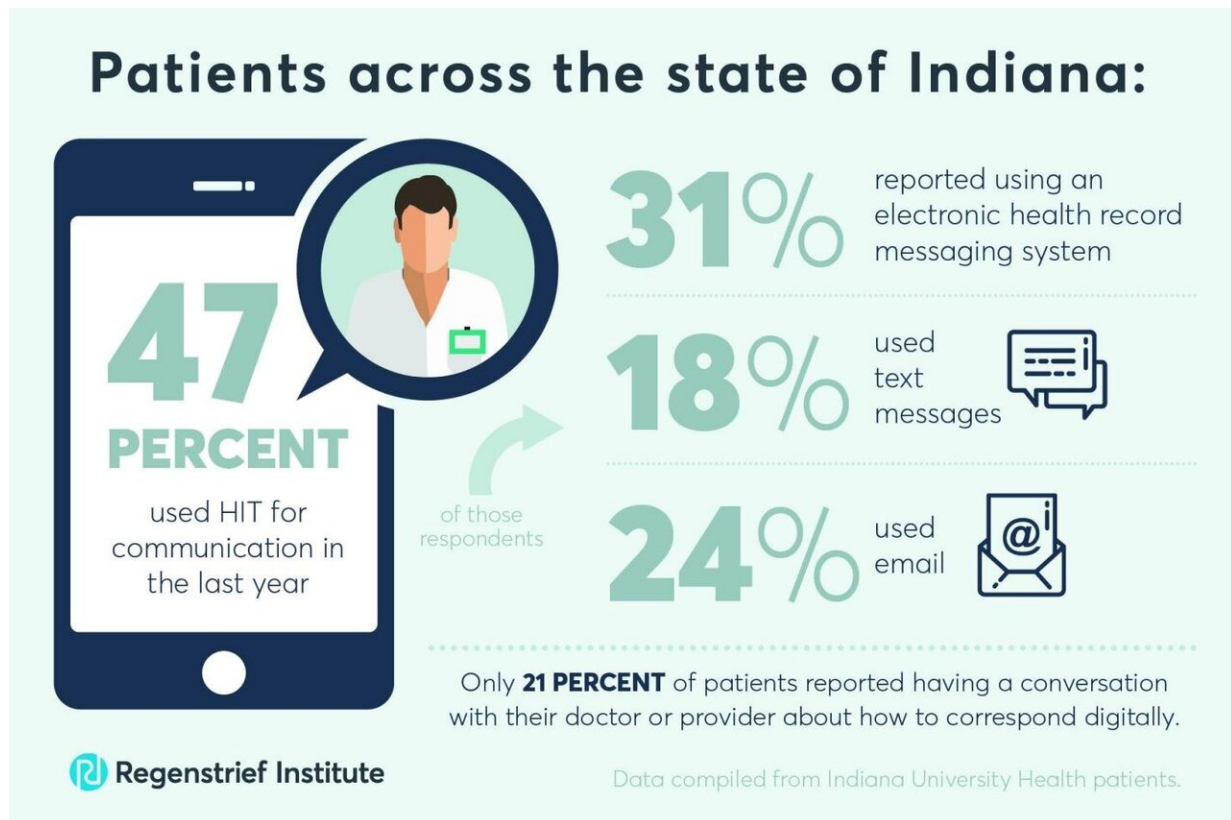


About half of people use health technology to communicate with their health providers

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New research from Regenstrief Institute and Indiana University School of Medicine shows that 47 percent of people are using technology to communicate with their healthcare providers, and less than a quarter are having conversations with their providers about using health information technology (HIT). Credit: Regenstrief Institute

New research shows that 47 percent of people are using technology to communicate with their healthcare providers, and less than a quarter are having conversations with their providers about using health information technology (HIT). Regenstrief Institute and Indiana University research scientists say these numbers indicate there are more opportunities to engage patients in this type of communication.

"The results of our statewide survey indicate patients are using [health information technology](#)," said Joy L. Lee, Ph.D., first author of the paper and Regenstrief research scientist. "However, they aren't talking to their provider about it. One of the few widely agreed upon recommendations for [electronic communication](#) in healthcare is for providers to be talking to their patients about it ahead of time. This does not appear to be happening regularly, and may be impacting the use of this technology." Dr. Lee is also an assistant professor of medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine.

"How patients and providers are using technology to communicate may have changed over the last few months in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, but having a shared agenda about how to communicate, what is appropriate to send as a message, and being able to discuss it openly is still important to foster the electronic patient-provider relationship," Dr. Lee continued.

Researchers sent surveys to Indiana University Health patients across the state of Indiana asking about their use of technology to communicate with their doctor. Data analysis showed 47 percent had used HIT for communication in the last year. Of those respondents,

- 31 percent reported using an electronic [health](#) record messaging system
- 24 percent used email
- 18 percent used text messages

Because this survey was statewide, researchers say it gives a more representative snapshot of health behaviors. These numbers are similar to other research results from across the country. The numbers show a shift toward secure messaging, which is the platform health systems are encouraging people to use because of its integration with the electronic health record.

Out of all the respondents, only 21 percent reported having a conversation with their doctor or provider about how to correspond digitally.

"This lack of conversation may lead to patients not taking advantage of these online communication platforms which have strong potential for patient engagement," said David Haggstrom, M.D., senior author on the paper and interim director of the Regenstrief Institute William M. Tierney Center for Health Services Research. "Individuals may be more likely to use messaging if they know what subjects are appropriate and how their provider might respond. We need to look at providing more support for both patients and providers to facilitate these conversations. The need for remote communication has been dramatically highlighted in the rapidly changing healthcare environment associated with COVID-19."

More information: Joy L. Lee et al, Communication About Health Information Technology Use Between Patients and Providers, *Journal of General Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1007/s11606-020-05903-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-05903-1)

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