Pandemic to accelerate adoption of electronic patient portal for epilepsy

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The COVID-19 pandemic is a catalyst to accelerate the adoption of technology-enabled patient care for epilepsy, according to a new study published in *Epilepsia*.

Building on the HSE eHealth Ireland funded Epilepsy Lighthouse Project, the research was led by FutureNeuro, the SFI Research Centre for Chronic and Rare Neurological Diseases, hosted by RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences. Funding for the project has continued through the Health Research Board (HRB) Applied Partnership Award.

The study describes an electronic patient portal for people with epilepsy that has been developed for patients in Ireland. Named PiSCES (providing individualised services and care for people with epilepsy), the portal is linked to the Irish National Epilepsy Electronic Patient Record.

PiSCES gives people access to their medical record documenting their epilepsy care anywhere there is an internet connection using a smartphone, tablet device or desktop computer. Users of PiSCES can access their clinic visit summaries and tools to report outcomes, such as frequency of seizures. The portal also allows people to track epilepsy care goals and send secure messages directly to their healthcare provider.

"Our work on the development of PiSCES patient portal for epilepsy began before the COVID-19 crisis with the aim of facilitating better patient and family-centred epilepsy care by improving the link between people with epilepsy and their clinicians," commented Mary Fitzsimons,

eHealth Lead at FutureNeuro, RCSI.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the urgency to accelerate much needed health service reform to implement innovations such as electronic patient portals. PiSCES has the capability to transform out-patient care for people with epilepsy, by maximizing health service resources that may be constrained in the aftermath of the pandemic.

"In the aftermath of COVID-19, it is highly unlikely that the healthcare sector will return to a 'business as usual' way of delivering services as we knew them previously. The pandemic is has been a catalyst for change in how patient care will be conducted in the future, delivering technology-enables care that is more responsive to individual patient needs and preferences," she said.

The research was carried out in collaboration with the Health Service Executive (HSE), Beaumont Hospital, St James's Hospital, DCU and Ergo. Dr. Kevin Power, Research Engineer at RCSI and Futureneuro is first author on the paper.

Brendan Dunleavy, Head of Software Development Ergo Group said, "We are delighted to be part of this group that looks to utilise cloud and web technology to help support people with epilepsy. This is another step on the path to a true patient-centric approach to delivering acute clinical care services.

We have seen that COVID-19 has been an accelerator for technology adoption across industries and healthcare has been no exception. We look forward to seeing this work being used as an exemplar of empowering people with epilepsy."

Provided by RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences

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