

Female primary care physicians face a higher electronic health record workload than male counterparts

February 1 2022



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Previous studies have shown that female physicians spend more time working in the electronic health record (EHR) than do male physicians.

A new study from the Brigham examines the reasons for this difference. The retrospective study included a sample of 125 primary care physicians (PCPs) at the Brigham and measured the time spent in the EHR, as well as the volume of messages that PCPs received from both staff and patients. The results show that female PCPs spend 20 percent more time working in the EHR inbasket than do male PCPs.

This difference was not explained by the higher percentage of [female patients](#) seen by female PCPs. Instead, the increased time in the EHR inbasket was explained by the significantly higher volume of messages sent to female PCPs compared with their male counterparts: female PCPs received 24 percent more messages from staff, and 26 percent more messages from patients. The authors suggest that development of strategies to address the disproportionate EHR workload is needed in order to decrease the high rate of burnout among female PCPs.

"These differential EHR burdens may contribute to higher burnout rates in female PCPs," said Eve Rittenberg, MD, of the Brigham's Division of Women's Health. "In particular, time spent in the EHR inbasket, within which physicians respond to messages from patients, staff, and colleagues, has been linked to burnout."

The research was published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

More information: Eve Rittenberg et al, Primary Care Physician Gender and Electronic Health Record Workload, *Journal of General Internal Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s11606-021-07298-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-021-07298-z)

Provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital

Citation: Female primary care physicians face a higher electronic health record workload than

male counterparts (2022, February 1) retrieved 14 May 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-02-female-primary-physicians-higher-electronic.html>

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