



# OpenNotes: Results

## Patients say:

*"This is great! It removes the mystery from what the doctor is writing down."*

*"Weeks after my visit, I thought, wasn't I supposed to look into something? I went online immediately. Good thing! It was a precancerous skin lesion my doctor wanted removed (I did)."*

*"It really is much easier to show my family who are also my caregivers the information in the notes than to try and explain myself. I find the notes more accurate than my recollections, and they allow my family to understand what is actually going on with my health, not just what my memory decides to store."*



As part of a yearlong trial, primary care doctors at three major, diverse health centers around the country invited their patients to read their visit notes online. 105 doctors and more than 19,000 patients participated in OpenNotes. After 12 months, doctors and patients reported on their experiences:

## Patients Were Enthusiastic

### Patients used the notes

Of those with notes available, 84% of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center patients and 92% of Geisinger Health System patients opened at least one note. At Harborview Medical Center, where patients were using the portal for the first time, 47% opened at least one note. And 20-42% (depending on the site) shared their notes with someone else, usually family members or relatives.

### They reported important benefits

77-85% reported better understanding of their health and medical conditions. 77-87% felt more in control of their care. 70-72% said they took better care of themselves. 60-78% reported doing better with taking their medications.

### They did not feel overwhelmed

Very few patients (1-8%) reported being confused, worried, or offended by what they read in their doctors' notes.

The three sites in the OpenNotes study:



**Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center,**  
a Harvard teaching hospital

**GEISINGER**

**Geisinger Health System,**  
Pennsylvania's rural health network

**UW Medicine**

HARBORVIEW  
MEDICAL CENTER

**Harborview Medical Center,**  
a UW Medicine academic medical  
center serving vulnerable populations  
in Seattle and King County

To learn more about OpenNotes visit our website at [www.myopennotes.org](http://www.myopennotes.org) or follow us on  
**Twitter: @myopennotes**

## Doctors say:

*"I think patients believe something I write in the chart more completely than when verbally communicated - I think it's more real to them. This enhances our communication and moves us further down the road to addressing chronic problems."*

*"I felt like my care was safer, as I knew that patients would be able to update me if I didn't get it right. I also felt great about partnering with my patients, and the increased openness."*

*"For me the most difficult thing was having to be careful about tone and phrasing of the notes, knowing the patient would be reading them."*

*"My fears: Longer notes, more questions and messages from patients. In reality, it was not a big deal."*



## Doctors Saw Benefit and Little Burden

Before we began, doctors were nervous about whether OpenNotes would interrupt their workflow or interfere with their relationships with patients.

### Few doctors reported significant impacts on workflow

0-5% reported longer visits. 0-8% took more time addressing patients' questions outside of visits. 0-21% reported taking more time writing notes. And an analysis of e-mail traffic before and during the trial showed that doctors overall did not receive more messages from patients.

### A substantial minority of doctors reported changing their documentation

While the study did not examine individual notes, 3-36% of participating doctors reported changing the way they wrote about mental health, substance abuse, cancer, and obesity.

### Many doctors described strengthened relationships with their patients

They cited enhanced trust, transparency, communication, and shared decision making.

## At the End of the Study, Patients and Doctors Wanted to Continue

- 99% of patients wanted open notes to continue.
- 17-26% of doctors preferred not to continue, but when offered the chance to stop, none did.
- 85-89% of patients said availability of open notes would influence their future choices of doctors and health plans.

Source: Inviting patients to read their doctors' notes: a quasi-experimental study and a look ahead. T Delbanco, J Walker, SK Bell, JD Darer, JG Elmore, N Farag, HJ Feldman, R Mejilla, L Ngo, JD Ralston, SE Ross, N Trivedi, E Vodicka, SG Leveille. *Ann Intern Med* 2012;157:461-470.