

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Laura Pearson. She's a clinical informatics coordinator here at Lake Region Healthcare, and here to talk with us about Lake Region Healthcare's new patient portal.

Good morning, Laura.

Laura Pearson: Good morning, Katie. Thanks for having me.

Katie Johnson: Thank you for joining me. We have had a patient portal as a feature for our patients for a few years, but we have some news to share about an upgrade maybe, so to speak, to our patient portal. And we want to make sure our listeners know about that and know what the benefits will be to them and how they can access it. So thanks for joining me to shed some light on the new patient portal.

But I want to start kind of at the beginning with the basics. What is a patient portal? And we talk a lot about electronic medical record when we talk about portal. So let's just do some basic definitions of those two things.

Laura Pearson: Yeah, absolutely. The electronic medical record is where we should first start. Our electronic health record, you might hear people say EHR, that is essentially your old paper chart in electronic form. We don't have folders necessarily moving around the clinic anymore and medical records. We now have it all in our software on the computers. So that essentially is all of your patient data all in one combined piece with different patient identifiers and things like that that keep it all separate and safe.

Katie Johnson: And I picture that little folder that they used to have in the box when the doctor came in the office. I just kind of picture that little folder being inside of a computer and that's my EHR.

Laura Pearson: Yup. And you know, one of the big benefits of that is you don't have to go track down the folder to find information on a patient. So it makes our work a little more efficient and seamless as an organization.

Katie Johnson: Right. And so then a patient portal is just how we can access that ourselves?

Laura Pearson: Yep, absolutely. A patient portal is just that. It's a portal or an opening into your own record. It is a way for you to get at certain parts of your record. It's not complete access to everything, which you still can get using our release of information department. But the portal will give you your medications, allergies, immunizations, stuff like that. It will also have lab results, radiology results, clinical summary type things.

Katie Johnson: We've had a portal for a few years now, like we said. What was the reason for this upgrade, or why did Lake Region Healthcare feel it was important to move to the new platform?

Laura Pearson: The biggest reason here is that it is more intricately connected to our current electronic health record than our previous portal was. There's a lot more features that we can eventually turn on and it's really exciting what we potentially can be doing with this portal in the future versus the one that we had before.

Katie Johnson: Right. And we've been able to test this as employees for a few weeks. So, from my perspective, I really think it is more user-friendly. Not only does it have more features, it just feels a little bit more modern, user-friendly, intuitive perhaps. And like you said, more connected with both your hospital records and your clinic records at Lake Region Healthcare.

Laura Pearson: I would agree with the user-friendliness. Even if you're not really comfortable or really good at navigating in a system, there's lots of different ways to do kind of the same thing in here. So you're going to find a way that's going to work for you, and it is pretty easy to just click around and figure it out. You're not going to break anything.

Katie Johnson: Exactly. That's the good news. So let's talk about some of the enhanced features. What might people notice as being different or new?

Laura Pearson: Sure. Well, one thing we are adding with the update to this, Follow My Health is the name of the portal, is that we're adding the radiology results where we weren't able to have them flow into our last portal. So that's a big plus. The reports for many of your radiology results will be available once they are finalized.

And then a couple of other really nice things that I see useful is that there's a mobile app you can download on your phone. And if most of you listeners are used to trying to do websites on your phone, they can be sometimes not that easy to navigate on the little tiny screen, but an app is definitely made for that size screen and that kind of a device. So that's pretty handy.

And then you can also sign up within your portal. You can put in your preferences whether you want text reminders or push notifications from the app or things like that. So just a little bit more ease and easier for you to stay connected and engaged with your own healthcare.

Katie Johnson: Right. I agree. I think that the text reminders or the push notifications on the phone are one of the really nice features, but of course you can still do the things that you could do before like message your provider's office, request an appointment, those kinds of features too.

Laura Pearson: Yep. All of that is still available and again, more user-friendly than even before.

Katie Johnson: Right. A question I have is about whether or not this patient portal only provides you access to Lake Region Healthcare records, or does it integrate with other facilities you might get care at? You know, maybe if you go to the Mayo Clinic or if you go to a hospital when you're down south for the winter, will you be able to get those records through this as well?

Laura Pearson: It's possible, I guess would be the answer to that question. Follow My Health is a third party software piece. Third party meaning it's not just for our Allscripts hospital side of things and clinic side of things, but it can connect with other types of EHRs and other organizations that have the capability to connect to Follow My Health.

Now, there's not a lot in this area of the state that are using the same technology, but all EHRs do have a patient portal, or most EHRs should have a patient portal. I'll put it that way. So yes, the answer is it's possible if the facility that you receive care at is also connected to Follow My Health. Does that make sense?

Katie Johnson: It does. Or if they're able to talk to each other, so it would be on a case by case basis.

Laura Pearson: Yeah. Definitely.

Katie Johnson: If you're not comfortable with technology, it's pretty easy to set it up so that you can share this with someone else that you trust maybe to help you access your records too. Can you talk a little bit about how that works?

Laura Pearson: Sure, yep. Definitely. We would call that an authorized individual access and especially in the case of like an adult to an adult. It could be possible that there is an adult daughter that has an elderly parent that maybe the elderly parent is not planning to utilize a portal. They want nothing to do with a computer possibly, which is totally fine. Or maybe they're not able to sign up for their own patient portal account, but they can give access or give authorization to someone else for their portal.

So there's a form that can be filled out within our release of information department. They can get you set up, and then you essentially as the adult daughter or whatever in this example would also sign the form and then get an invitation and then follow the steps to get your own portal account created, which then attaches to that patient's record.

Katie Johnson: Yeah, I can see that being really helpful in that instance where whether you live close to Mom or Dad or not, but maybe want to be informed about their medical situations, and they give you that permission. It can be a really helpful

way to share that information. For parents too, this can be a really useful tool, and there's a process for getting access to your kids' records as well.

Laura Pearson: Yup, absolutely. I'm in that demographic I guess right now with needing access to my children's records. Just the easiest piece for me is the appointment reminders and then also, or the greatest piece, is the immunization records. Especially this time of year when we're ramping up and going back to school and we need to prove that our kids are immunized. It's really handy.

So yeah, the way that we can as a parent or a legal guardian of a minor can get hooked up to the portal would be through just talking to anybody at one of our registration desks. They will have a paper form that can be filled out, or even through our corporate website there should be a link on there with an electronic form to fill out, and that gets routed to the right people. Essentially, either way you do that, you're going to get an email invite and then set up your account that way.

Katie Johnson: And like you said, just easy to print off those immunization records and manage your children's health a lot better. There are some ages that are important to know about access to kids' information though as it relates to what you can legally access for your kids.

Laura Pearson: Correct. Yeah, and a lot of people may or may not be aware of this, but in the state of Minnesota anyway, our legal age for having to cut off parental access to a child's healthcare records is age 13. So from the ages of 13 to 18, our portal kind of goes black for lack of a better way to describe it and no new information will populate that portal, but you'll still have access as a parent to the information from previous, like from zero to 12 years old.

So just being aware of that timeframe. Once your kids turn 13, you'll get a notification that your portal will no longer be populating.

Katie Johnson: How about for listeners who are on our current portal and they're like, "Great, do I automatically get transitioned to the new portal? Do I have to do something to move myself to the new portal? How does that work?"

Laura Pearson: You do have to do a little something. We obviously have a list of who is engaged in the portal or who is connected to the portal, and even patients who have given us their email address in the past that maybe never got around to setting up a portal before, they will be receiving, we're going to push out a mass invite. So all of the people in our system currently that have an email in our system or have a portal account in the old portal will be receiving an invite in their email inbox.

So be watching for that very soon over the next several days as we get that rolled out. And all you need to do is follow the link in there, and it's really easy to set up. So just follow the steps. It's not tough.

- Katie Johnson: So just watch your email. And for new patients as they come in and register, anytime they provide an email address to us, that will trigger an invitation to new patients as I understand.
- Laura Pearson: Yep. That is correct. If they have not given us an email address before, any time you have a hospital or a clinic encounter, you will receive an invite to set up your patient portal and it'll connect you to both the hospital and clinic at the same time. So you won't have to get a separate invitation for each location. So again, just be sure at registration when they ask if you want to offer your email address up, know that that's for the access to the portal especially.
- Katie Johnson: And what if I don't have an appointment coming up anytime soon, but I'd like to get signed up? There's a way to do that on the website too?
- Laura Pearson: Yup, absolutely. If you follow the link on the website, basically what you do there. it's a little bit different than receiving an invitation, but you can follow the link on our website and create your own Follow My Health portal account. And then you request connection to Lake Region Healthcare. So what that does, it sends us a message that you're looking to get connected with us and we have some identification, validation things that we do on our end to make sure we get the right people connected to the right information. So, that might take a day or two. So you don't have to wait for an appointment in order to make your portal.
- Katie Johnson: And what about the information there? Will historical information load into Follow My Health portal, or only this point going forward?
- Laura Pearson: We will be having some historical information in there. You'll see previous vital signs and medication lists and all that kind of stuff. There's a certain amount that's being dumped in there right away. So it's not just from this day forward. Anything new of course will go into this new portal. It won't be populating the other portal.
- But yeah, there will be some historical. Not everything all-encompassing, but yeah.
- Katie Johnson: And for users of the old portal, we'll keep a link to the old Manage My Health portal out there for you to access some of that historical information. But you should have what you need in Follow My Health, and certainly going forward it sounds like it will be a great addition to the access we provide to patients for their electronic medical record.
- Anything else you'd like our listeners to know, Laura, about Follow My Health and the new patient portal we're offering to patients rolling out later this week?
- Laura Pearson: One other thing I forgot to mention when we were talking about giving access to other people, besides the whole idea of an adult giving access to another

adult through this release of information department, that's if you don't have a portal to begin with. But if you are a patient like myself, I have a portal account, I can go ahead right on there and give my husband access for example without having to go through Lake Region at all. It's under your connections section under - So it is really simple, which is super nice, and it also takes us out of the equation so it happens more instantaneously.

But other than that, no. I just really want people to check it out as soon as we get it up and rolling. I think you're going to be happy with it. I think it's a really great tool to stay engaged and stay connected, message your doctors when you have questions. There's even a way to send billing questions actually.

Katie Johnson: That's right. That's right.

Laura Pearson: We're here to help you, and we want to stay connected with you, and this is a tool for you to do that with.

Katie Johnson: It really is. We talk a lot about patient-centered care being what we're all about and about how important it is for each of us to be engaged in our own healthcare, to be really proactive about our own healthcare. I really see this patient portal as an improved tool to help you do just that.

So Follow My Health new patient portal rolling out this week. Watch our website LRHC.Org, watch your email box for an invitation if you have an email on file with us here, or just go on our website. Click the link once it's live and request a connection to Lake Region Healthcare, and we'll get you connected to all that information to help you manage your health.

Laura, thanks for joining me today and sharing all the great information.

Laura Pearson: You are very welcome. Thanks so much for having me.

Katie Johnson: Laura Pearson, clinical informatics coordinator at Lake Region Healthcare, my guest today on Apple a Day. Laura and Katie invite you to sign up for Follow My Health, and we remind you there's so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.