

Katie Johnson (00:00):

Good morning and welcome to day. It's our monthly conversation with the people of Lake Region Healthcare to share news and information that you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Niki Ness. She is our Patient Experience Specialist, and she is going to help us share some really exciting news for patients of Lake Region and Prairie Ridge about our new electronic medical health record. Good morning, Niki.

Niki Ness (00:25):

Good morning. Thanks for having me.

Katie Johnson (00:27):

Thanks for being with us. I, before we start talking about our transition to Epic, I want to give people a little bit of background about who you are and what your role is before we to start, unloading all this great, exciting news, about Epic, because your role as patient experience, specialist is all about all the things that, that we do here to try and make the person centered healthcare experience happen. So tell people a little bit more about who you are, what your background is and what you do here.

Niki Ness (00:59):

Sure. So I've been with like region for 10 years now. I started my career here as a nurse registered nurse, in the medical surgical area in ICU. I did some health supervision for a few years, so I feel like I have a pretty good background of this organization and then jumped into my current role of patient experience specialist. And, you know, really my role is just about, you know, how do we, as a healthcare system provide the best care and service to our patients, you know, that's our ultimate goal. So I work closely with our patient experience survey vendor, Press Ganey. We look at what are the patient feedback from these surveys telling us, I share those insights and that information with the departments and the people who work here and, you know, we work together to come up with, you know, how can we make things better? What are we doing really well? What can we replicate other places? And then what do we just need to change? And then help them come up with, ideas or improvement, you know, provide improvement resources so they can get to work and, and do those things. I also work very closely with our patient and family advisory council. so that's a group of patients and family members who get together regularly. And we just talk about, you know, how things are going with lake region and Prairie Ridge. what things are we doing well again, where do they see need for improvement? they typically have a specific focus that we look at. So whether it's, looking at, you know, how we process and share test results, which is something we've looked at to, you know, what do we do with that patient feedback we get when we have, you know, patients who don't have, who have a less than desirable experience, you know, how do we follow up with them and what do we do internally to make sure that we're, addressing their concerns. And then most recently the MyChart portal, you know, how do we provide patients with the access to their healthcare information? So kind of a lot, really!

Katie Johnson (02:47):

Yeah, it really is. And one of the things that I think is really nice for our listeners to hear about you and your role is that when they get that survey, someone does actually look at the results. I hear that sometimes "I'm not going to fill it out. I don't think anybody ever looks at it or nothing ever is done with it anyway." And, you ensure that that does happen.

Niki Ness ([03:06](#)):

Oh Yes. I read every comment and I look at of the surveys to see what people are saying, really just looking at that feedback, trying to figure out what are the trends that we're seeing here and then sharing all of that great information with the people who work here. Right. so yeah, We really do look at that feedback.

Katie Johnson ([03:24](#)):

And always, always aiming to improve, which is so awesome. As you mentioned, our patient and family advisory council is a, a great group of people who just really do give us advice and council on how we can improve. And they were the first to get a demo of MyChart. MyChart is the portal that comes with the Epic electronic medical record that we are implementing. And, that's what we're going to talk to our listeners about this morning. They may have heard of Epic - if you've been a patient at Sanford or Mayo - it's really the gold standard of electronic medical records, honestly. So chances are good you've heard of it. And we are embarking on this, process. We've been knee deep in it for a long time already, but we're getting close to a November 1st launch. So we decided it was time to start to talk to our patients and our community about what that's going to mean for them when we join the Epic family later this year. So give us a little background first, from the patient's perspective, what is it going to mean to join Epic?

Niki Ness ([04:28](#)):

So joining Epic is a really big undertaking for Lake Region and Prairie Ridge and for our community, really. It's a 25 million investment. So it's something that we are spending a lot of resources on, because it's a big thing. Organizations our size require a community connect partner in order to access Epic. So our partner will be Sanford Health... that just was the most logical and best solution for us to join. It's going to bring together our three separate systems. So currently we use Allscripts and Paragon at Lake Region and CPSI as the electronic health record at Prairie Ridge. As we all know, they don't always communicate very well together. So by using Epic, we will be able to offer safer, more coordinated, streamlined care, at both Lake Region and Prairie Ridge. And then also connecting to those facilities who you might be referred to for specialty care, like your Sanford and Mayo systems among many others. Epic holds the largest market share across the healthcare industry. And it's specifically intended for healthcare systems like ours and those who are larger. So it offers tools and functionality to support all of the various specialties. And it does a really great job of bringing all the different departments together across the system, because so many systems across the country use Epic, patient care can be more coordinated with the different providers and different organizations that have access to that necessary information within just a few clicks, rather than relying on faxes and mail. Right. Which we know can sometimes be a problem. So, this is what makes the MyChart portal also such a game changer for our patients because they can access their own healthcare information from all of these other healthcare systems, all in one place linked together.

Katie Johnson ([06:06](#)):

Yeah. So let's start by explaining a little bit more about what MyChart is and then maybe we'll dive into some individual features.

Niki Ness ([06:13](#)):

Yep. So MyChart is Epic's patient portal. So for those of you who don't know, a portal is really a secure online health connection that contains all of your personal health information in one place. So your current medications, your test results, upcoming and past appointments, medical bills, and so much

more. The MyChart portal allows you to quickly schedule appointments, send messages to your care team, review information from your recent visits or hospital stays, and have those video visits that we've had recently....just name a few of those features. If you have children or elderly parents or other people that you, provide care for, you can also stay on top of their appointments and check in on those family members who need that extra help all from your one, my portal account.

Katie Johnson ([06:57](#)):

And when you say electronic, does that mean it's on your phone, on your computer? How do you access your electronic medical record?

Niki Ness ([07:06](#)):

So you can do both. For people who are more comfortable on their mobile phones or like a tablet device, you can use the mobile app. There's also the MyChart on your desktop computer. So really it's, it's functional for anybody who has online access.

Katie Johnson ([07:19](#)):

Perfect. Let's talk about some of those features you mentioned a little bit more. We probably don't have time to talk about all of them, but we'll try and pick what some of the highlights are as far as benefits for patients. I heard you say making appointments. Now that's a big change. Sometimes it's nice to talk to a person or a scheduler individually, but sometimes it's nice to be able to make that appointment on your own time, in the middle of the night or whenever you want and pick that time. So tell us more about how that's going to work.

Niki Ness ([07:50](#)):

Yep. So with my chart, patients will be able to schedule and cancel appointments at any time and from anywhere by removing that need to speak to a person. Patients no longer need to wait for the clinic to be open, to schedule an appointment or wait on hold for a scheduler to answer their call. We know that can sometimes be a frustration, just that waiting for somebody to pick up their call. So this removes that frustration. If something comes up over the weekend and you decide you either need to see a provider or you need to cancel your upcoming appointment, you can take care of that in the moment. You don't have to try to remember to do it on Monday. Online scheduling can be done for many different appointment types, including all well visits for infants, children, teens, adults, prenatal visits, several other visits, even mammograms. Patients will simply need to use their direct scheduling to indicate what type of appointment they would like to schedule and then select a provider and/or a desired location for that appointment. And they'll have several appointment options to choose from, it's quick and convenient, and again can be done day or night. And if you select an appointment time, but you were really hoping to be able to get into the provider's office sooner, you have the option to go on the wait list for an earlier appointment. Of course, for those patients who still would rather speak to a person to find the best appointment, our schedulers will still be available to assist with those.

Katie Johnson ([09:03](#)):

Of course, of course. And they do a great job so not to, take anything away from that. Some of the other features MyChart offers that I think will be interesting to our patients include communicating with your care team. This is going to really streamline that process.

Niki Ness ([09:20](#)):

Yes. So secure messaging is available through MyChart. It allows patients, the ability to communicate with their provider and their care team, as well as our clerical staff, regarding upcoming appointments or our patient account representatives for their billing related messages. Messaging within MyChart is really similar to other messaging apps on your mobile device or email on your desktop computer. You can just identify who you want to communicate with, what the subject of your message is, and then include the details and send it off. MyChart messaging will allow patients to include attachments like photos or short videos that can help provide more information when it's necessary. And by using the message feature, patients can communicate with our staff when it's most convenient for them again, removing some of those barriers, like you said, you know, relying on making a phone call, getting to the right person, or playing phone tag, right? The messaging within MyChart is secure. So you can be confident that the information you share is protected.

Katie Johnson ([10:11](#)):

That's the big difference, right? You're not sending it out over the worldwide open internet but on a secure platform is going to be the difference there. Getting your test results, through the portal is, as you mentioned about the PFAC, is one of the things that comes up often....people's concerns about the timeliness of getting their test results. MyChart offers a really nice way to have that happen almost instantly.

Niki Ness ([10:38](#)):

Yes, with this feature patients appreciate the ability to view those test results as soon as they're final. So as soon as the lab results or radiology reports have been released, patients and providers will have access to them at the same time. So there is no delay for patients. This means that most often patients will see their results before their provider does. But with the results functionality in MyChart, patients can view the result when it's released and then they can go back and review it again after the provider has seen the result. So maybe the provider will add comments or directions. They'll still be able to see that this feature takes away that need to call your provider's office or to wait for someone to contact you with your results.

Katie Johnson ([11:15](#)):

Right. I can imagine all kinds of scenarios where it'll be nice just to know when it's there and not have to wonder and wait, "should I call shouldn't I call?" You're going to know. It'll show up as soon as it happens. You mentioned earlier connecting and managing your kids' accounts, or maybe you have, other family members, parents, or something that you help provide care for this lets you do that all in, in one place. Or do you have to, do you have to sign in and out? How does that work?

Niki Ness ([11:46](#)):

So with MyChart there's what's called proxy access. So that means you have the ability to access those child's, loved ones, whoever it is that you take care of ..... you can access their healthcare record all within your own portal account. So you can navigate between your record and anyone that you've been granted proxy access for just by simply selecting, I think it's up in the right hand corner, even - it's super easy to just navigate between those accounts. You can see their upcoming appointments, their health information medications, you can schedule appointments for them, or you can communicate with members of their team, essentially anything that you are able to do as a patient you can do as their proxy. So for example, again, say you're up in the middle of the night with a young child or an elderly

patient who's unwell, and you'd like to get them into the healthcare provider the next day. You don't need to be sure that you're awake at eight o'clock in the morning to call, to get that first available appointment. You can log into my chart in the middle of the night and schedule the appointment for the next day.

Katie Johnson ([12:37](#)):

That will be really nice for so many people who are caregivers, both for the older generation or a younger generation. Speaking of kids, immunization history is a big one. How handy is that to have that at your fingertips all the time?

Niki Ness ([12:52](#)):

Oh yeah. Immunization history is just so important. I think especially this time of year, you know, school is starting up again. Kids are going to camp and daycares. As a mother of young children I find this feature so helpful because my kids are in school and daycare and they all want those updated immunization records every fall. So with MyChart, you can just view and print those updated immunization records from your desktop or your mobile device. It's all there on one sheet. And you can just take that in.

Katie Johnson ([13:20](#)):

Handy! You mentioned corresponding with the billing office and the ability to pay your bills as well. So even outside of the medical record, you're able to manage really every part of your experience. Talk a little bit more about how the bill pay feature will work inside of MyChart,

Niki Ness ([13:37](#)):

Right, so MyChart allows you to access and pay your medical bills, review recent statements and pay and your past payment history. So you can pay a copay prior to arriving for your visit, you could pay all or part of a recent bill, and you can even identify which bill you'd like to apply a specific payment to all within the MyChart portal. Many find this feature especially helpful when it comes time for tax season because they have access to that payment history. And again, you're able to reach out to a member of our patient account representative team with any questions regarding a statement or a payment using that secure messaging through MyChart.

Katie Johnson ([14:10](#)):

I bet it's handy for keeping track of those receipts for your HSA and all that stuff too!

Niki Ness ([14:13](#)):

Oh, I, yeah. I'm sure.

Katie Johnson ([14:15](#)):

Nice. We touched on this briefly at the beginning, but connecting accounts from other healthcare organizations, because Epic is used at so many locations across the United States. If you have a provider at a winter home or you're referred to a specialist somewhere, this is going to make a connection to all of those different providers somewhat seamless, right?

Niki Ness ([14:42](#)):

Yeah, exactly. The MyChart portal has the ability to connect and link accounts from other organizations. So patients who receive care outside of Lake Region from a provider who also uses Epic, that's kind of the key there, will be able to connect that health information from their providers here and there. With that ability to connect patients can navigate between healthcare organizations. So you can either set it up so that you see all of your information from Lake Region and Prairie Ridge and then you can swipe across to see information from another organization, or you can link those accounts together so that all your information from your different organizations is all within one account. So you can see upcoming appointments or past appointments from Lake Region and Sanford or Lake Region and Mayo. You'll be able to see any documents from any providers, any results, and send messages to those different healthcare teams all within that one MyChart account.

Katie Johnson ([15:34](#)):

Wow. That's really bringing some coordination to healthcare that we've been, been looking for for a long time.

Niki Ness ([15:42](#)):

Yes, really helpful. I think, like you said, for those snowbirds who have almost primary providers at two different locations, to really be able to keep all that information together is so helpful.

Katie Johnson ([15:51](#)):

That's where, when you mentioned that faxing, I think that's when it comes into play a lot....you need to contact your provider back home and get the nurse there to fax your records over here. Boy, this will make that so much easier. This might be a good time to mention too, when you, said early on organizations our size, need someone bigger to access Epic through. We just aren't big enough to buy it directly. And Sanford was chosen as our partner. Like you said, this was really logical, common sense because we share so many patients. They are one of the next line, tertiary care providers is what we call them. So many of our referrals when it's a level of care that we can't provide here, will often be referred as patients to Sanford. So we already have that close connection. I know that a lot of people also have a red flag that goes up that says, "wait a minute, aren't we worried that Sanford's going to take us over?" Really what this has done has, is developed a partnership with Sanford where we're working together to take care of patients rather than worrying about one, taking over the other.

Niki Ness ([17:04](#)):

And for patients who currently see providers at both locations, I think this is just going to make it so much easier for them because we don't have that ability to communicate through our electronic health record with Sanford currently. Again, right now you're relying on phone calls and faxes and, and all of that to get that information across. Whereas now this will truly allow us to partner with them as that next level of care that we are unable to provide, and for patients to have that seamless access to their information, and for those providers to be able to access their information here as well. It's just really going to improve that coordination of care across the health system.

Katie Johnson ([17:40](#)):

And it really must improve safety as well, by reducing the chance for error, right?

Niki Ness ([17:45](#)):

Oh, for sure. You're talking one medication list. You're talking one problem list. All of that information is seamless across the different organizations, so there's no longer that question of, you know, well, what's in your record back home. It's all one record.

Katie Johnson ([17:59](#)):

It's all right there. So we should talk quickly about many patients today who are on our current portal, that's called FollowMyHealth. It might raise some questions as to what does that transition look like? Do I stay with FollowMyHealth and MyChart? Or how do I make the switch to my chart? Can you give us a little bit of clarity around that?

Niki Ness ([18:21](#)):

Yeah, sure. So for anyone who used our previous portal before FollowMyHealth, this transition will be different. Everyone, regardless of whether they're currently on FollowMyHealth or not will need to sign up for the MyChart portal. The one exception to that will be patients who already have MyChart. Patients who have a MyChart account through Sanford today won't need to do anything. Their Lake Region and Prairie Ridge appointments and information will automatically start to display in their existing MyChart account once we make that switch to Epic in November. And again, that's because we're a Sanford connect site. So all of that information will be seamless. For those patients who have a MyChart account through another health system like Mayo, they'll need to activate a Lake Region or Prairie Ridge Sanford MyChart account, just like all of the rest of us, and then link that account to their existing MyChart account. The good news is that signing up for MyChart is really fairly simple. All patients need to do is provide us with an accurate email address or a mobile phone number, and an invitation to activate on MyChart portal account will be sent directly to them. Patients can also sign up online from their computer or mobile device without an invitation by going to [mySanfordchart.org](http://mySanfordchart.org). Members of our team will also be available to assist with signing up when it's needed.

Katie Johnson ([19:31](#)):

Yeah. And we'll have all of this on our website with an FAQ and with easy links come November. But we're hopefully doing a good job of making you excited for that November date and wanting to watch for that information once it's available. Anything else you can think of Nikki, that we want to tell patients today, or listeners today about what's coming and what to look forward to?

Niki Ness ([19:56](#)):

I think really this is just the best way to engage with your healthcare team, you know, to be an active member of your healthcare team and, and to really have that active role in learning more about your yourself and advocating for yourself about what's best for you and your health. I would say today the best thing that you could do as a patient to ease into that MyChart transition would be to make sure that we have your current contact information. So, an email address and/or a mobile phone number. This is going to allow us to send that MyChart activation invitation to you once we make that switch in November.

Katie Johnson ([20:30](#)):

Awesome. Well, this is an exciting change. We will definitely be talking more about this as we get closer to November, but thanks for giving us a little bit of a preview, a sneak peek of what's ahead with our transition to Epic and the introduction of MyChart as a patient portal. Niki Ness, patient experience specialist at Lake Region Healthcare, my guest today, as we start gearing up for a big change happening

here at Lake Region Healthcare and Prairie Ridge Healthcare on November 1<sup>st</sup>... the transition, to Epic.  
Thanks so much, Niki.

Niki Ness:

Thanks for having me.

Katie Johnson:

Niki Ness and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day today, reminding you that at Lake Region Healthcare and Prairie Ridge Healthcare, we are here for you, always. Have a great day.