



PATHWEIGH: Addressing Weight in Primary Care

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The Challenge

- Obesity is a significant and prevalent and is associated with over 200 known diseases and conditions.
- However, achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is commonly overlooked or not adequately addressed in health care visits.
- Many providers do not get or know how to get paid to deliver weight loss care, lack adequate training to do so, are not supported by systems and resources and feel that efforts to help patients may be futile.
- PATHWEIGH seeks to overcome these issues.



The Approach

- PATHWEIGH is a toolset embedded in Epic (electronic health record, EHR) at UCHHealth to improve the quality and efficiency of obesity treatment in primary care. It includes a number of tools such as disappearing help text (to guide clinical care), medication algorithm (for appropriate prescribing), e-consult (for specialist consultation), guidelines (embedded UpToDate).
- A specific visit type (weight prioritized visit) sets the process in motion and automatically generates a questionnaire to the patient which populates the record for efficiency in note taking and visit communication.
- Smart sets make patient action plans (check boxes), billing and coding (common conditions in which impact obesity and can be billed under) and patient education (educational handouts) efficient.
- The toolset relies on clinical judgement for use of evidence-based obesity treatment methods.
- An eLearning module with medical education credits supports clinician training on what treatments to select and how to best communicate with patients.

Research Highlights

Provider Approach and Implementation

- In pre-post surveys of cohort 1, primary care providers reported:
 - More attention on weight as a health concern (33%) and
 - Discussion about weight loss in other types of visits (33%).
- There were reductions in the proportion of concerns about providing weight management for:
 - “I don’t have time in my schedule”,
 - “I don’t feel like patients will be able to successfully change and lose weight”,
 - “We don’t have weight management workflows set up in our practice”, and
 - “We don’t have time to set up a new program” (all $P < .05$).
- Importance of weight management as something primary care should be involved with remained high.

Research Highlights

Uptake of Weight Prioritized Visit (WPV) Type

- Of 69,363 eligible patients, 9,412 (13.6%) had at least one visit where weight management was conducted during the examination period (March 17, 2021-March 16, 2022; cohort 1 intervention, cohorts 2 and 3 control).
- Of these, 227 (2.7%) were scheduled for at least one dedicated WPV Type (i.e. PATHWEIGH visit).

Qualitative themes:

- Benefits include time and structure to address weight by framing the conversation in a positive way and having time to discuss detailed personalized treatment plans.
- The WPV Type also facilitated pre-visit work in the form of a questionnaire, increasing visit efficiency and supporting robust and focused conversation.
- Challenges included struggles implementing accurate scheduling of WPV Types by the shared centralized call center and determining appropriate visit lengths.
- Finally, providers identified significant training needs regarding billing and coding for reimbursement.



To be continued

This is an ongoing study, therefore, patient reach (who participated) and effectiveness (weight loss and maintenance) as well as implementation outcomes (feasibility, acceptability, cost) are still being examined.

TSBM Benefits



- Therapeutic procedures – Medical providers and their teams have guidance on evidence-based weight treatments and how to deliver them
 - Software technologies - Enhancements to the medical record provide efficiency in conducting and documenting care
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- Health care characteristics - Patients can receive weight loss care in their own doctor's office which may offer care to more and diverse patients
 - Health care quality – Providing weight loss as a service can improve quality of care
 - Health promotion – Addressing a common preventable health issue
 - Disease prevention and reduction – Reduced weight is associated with improved health
 - Life expectancy and quality of life – Weight loss can result in a longer, healthier and higher quality of life
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- License agreements – PATHWEIGH is trademarked by the University of Colorado and will be made available eventually to other health systems using Epic

Potential Equity Impact

- May provide a way to support underserved or rural patients by providing care through traditional primary care settings.
- Weight Prioritized Visits may provide a way to have conversations about weight management in a non-stigmatizing way.

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