



Healthcare Consumers Increasingly Making Payments Online, New athenahealth Research Shows

March 10, 2020

Patients demonstrate a willingness to pay healthcare bills via mobile devices

WATERTOWN, Mass., March 10, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- athenahealth, Inc., a leading provider of network-enabled services for ambulatory and enterprise customers nationwide, today released a data analysis that looks at trends in patient payments from 2017 – 2019. A new athenahealth Research and Insights report, "[Trends in Patient Pay](#)" uncovers important patterns in how patients nationwide are paying their bills, highlighting the importance of a frictionless patient payment experience for both practices and patients.

The research, which was conducted to better understand the dynamics of patient obligations and payments, analyzed more than 158 million claims across 33 million patients who visited an athenahealth client in selected specialties over a 2.5-year period from July 2017 – Dec 2019. Specialties of focus were Primary Care, Pediatrics/Adolescent Medicine, Gastroenterology, OB/GYN, Orthopedics, Orthopedic Surgery, General Surgery, Cardiology, and Urgent Care.

While the research shows that the percentage of online payments increased across nearly all specialties, the areas with the largest percentage was pediatric/adolescent medicine (30 percent). Not surprisingly, the data also demonstrates that no matter the payment method, collecting patient obligations becomes harder as balances get higher. Still, for all specialties combined, the percentage of patient money owed that was paid within 6 months increased from 81.4 percent in 2017 to 82.6 percent in 2019.

Although payments through a desktop interface remained the most common channel for online payment, mobile increased by 63 percent as a share of total patient payment dollars from 2018 to 2019 – demonstrating patients' desire to pay medical bills via easier, more convenient methods when they are available. In fact, desktop payments declined across all age groups, especially those under age 40 (-14 percent, as opposed to -4 percent for those aged 40+), highlighting younger generations' preference for mobile-enabled payments.

"Today's patients expect convenient, digital interactions in most areas of their life – and that doesn't stop at healthcare," said Jessica Sweeney-Platt, executive director of research at athenahealth. "The biggest takeaway physicians should glean from this data is that it is no longer enough to offer patients a passive portal – it is critical to offer intuitive portals that allow patients to take action in an efficient manner. It is also important to note that we are seeing a move toward online payments across patients of all ages. Digital adoption is something we associate as being valuable to younger people, but it's increasing across the board."

Further supporting this sentiment, additional athenahealth [research](#) shows a positive correlation between greater portal adoption and patient pay yields, or the percentage of patient obligation that the practice is able to collect. Practices that increased portal adoption rates by 15 percentage points or more over 12 months saw a median increase in patient pay yield of nearly five percent.

For additional healthcare industry trends and insights made possible by athenahealth's open, connected network, visit <https://www.athenahealth.com/knowledge-hub>.

About athenahealth, Inc.

athenahealth partners with medical organizations across the country to drive clinical and financial results. Our vision is to create a thriving ecosystem that delivers accessible, high-quality, and sustainable healthcare for all, and we are pursuing this through our medical record, revenue cycle, patient engagement, and care coordination service offerings. Our expert teams build modern technology on an open, connected ecosystem, yielding insights that make a difference for our customers and their patients. For more information, please visit www.athenahealth.com.

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