Harvard Pilgrim medical record results the best ever

The results of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care’s most recent medical records review are the best to date. The performance success may well be due to the increasing use of electronic medical records (EMR) in Harvard Pilgrim’s network. A first-time comparison of EMR and paper records showed data captured in EMR documentation was more complete than that in paper records. This is welcome news because nearly 85% of Harvard Pilgrim members receive care in practices with EMR.

Every two years, we review patient charts to assess compliance with key Harvard Pilgrim medical record documentation standards. The most recent review, in 2007, focused on three important standards:

- Prominent documentation of drug allergies and adverse reactions
- Up-to-date and complete problem lists
- Easily identifiable and thorough medical histories

A sample of 250 patient charts from 53 practice sites was reviewed and, for the first time, the drug allergy documentation rate (85%) exceeded our performance target of 80%. Compliance with the problem list standard continues high at 87%, and past medical history remained unchanged, and below target, at 73%.

The analysis of EMR vs. paper charts showed 96% documentation of drug allergies in electronic records compared to 78% in paper charts. There was 95% compliance with the problem list standard vs. 83%, and 81% compliance on past medical history vs. 68%, in EMR vs. paper records, respectively.

Studies on EMR in medical literature have generally addressed the rate of, reasons for, and barriers to EMR adoption rather than focusing on their important quality of care benefits. Our findings, though limited in scope, may offer some evidence of EMR value in improving patient safety and the quality of patient care.

For more information about these results, strategies to improve medical record documentation, and Harvard Pilgrim’s standards, go to [www.harvardpilgrim.org/providers](http://www.harvardpilgrim.org/providers) and click on “Medical Management” and then “Medical Record Quality.” For printed copies of these documents, please call (617) 509-7564.