For patients, delivery of lab results is a time-sensitive event. Prompt delivery relieves much of the anxiety associated with lab tests, giving patients peace of mind.

Healthcare providers experience their own struggles when dealing with test results. How can practices provide a quick turnaround of results for their patients while minimizing the staff and financial resources needed? How can organizations then verify that these patients were notified to retrieve their results? The Kelsey-Seybold Clinic has found an answer.

Throughout its 20 clinic locations in the Houston area, Kelsey-Seybold stood to gain a lot from a new approach to lab results delivery. Lab letters were previously used to notify patients, requiring large expenditures for both printing and postage. Many staff hours were then spent fielding questions from patients, resulting in large numbers of both inbound and outbound phone calls. With Kelsey-Seybold’s personnel and financial resources being drained in results delivery, use of an automated delivery system seemed like a worthwhile decision.

Documentation has become increasingly important in the healthcare industry, and it was another issue that challenged Kelsey-Seybold. A standard delivery system could improve patient service, giving the clinic extra assurance that each patient was contacted.

Objective

To streamline delivery of lab results and documentation of retrieval with the assistance of TeleVox’s test results notification system. The solution was to allow patients immediate, secure access to their data as soon as results became available. This would eliminate the majority of the mailing expenses incurred and phone time utilized by Kelsey-Seybold and provide a higher level of care to patients. Detailed reporting would let staff know which patients picked-up test results and when the retrieval occurred.
Methods

TeleVox has provided Kelsey-Seybold with a user-friendly process to assign lab results to their patients. Each time a new set of results is ready for pick-up, the clinic sends TeleVox a data file of recipients and the corresponding message they should receive. As part of the test results notification system, TeleVox hosts a message library to cover a wide variety of examinations. TeleVox cross-references new results with the message library and adds new examination messages where applicable. Kelsey-Seybold staff members can choose messages for each patient and assign the results. By using the TeleVox system, Kelsey-Seybold is able to provide patients with 24/7 secure access to their results. During each visit in which a test is ordered, patients are given a wallet-sized card that includes the access information and directions. Patients will either call a toll-free number or visit a website to obtain their labs using the unique PIN on their card, ensuring confidentiality and HIPAA compliance.

Primary Benefits

Staff Time
Operations within the Kelsey-Seybold clinics have become significantly more efficient. Personnel spend less time on the phone, making fewer calls and avoiding "phone tag" with patients to deliver results. In turn, nurses report having more time available to focus on other tasks within the clinics.

Expense
Kelsey-Seybold estimates that their clinics complete about 1,000,000 patient visits per year, and of those patients, approximately 50% have an examination that requires lab analysis. Prior to using TeleVox, each patient was sent a letter to let them know results were ready, resulting in 500,000 mailings for lab results delivery. The cost of each piece included postage, forms and printing costs. Industry averages for these mailing costs are approximately 39.2 cents per piece, making the bill for Kelsey-Seybold’s mailed notifications about $191,000. Hours of nurses’ time were also dedicated to these mailings, generating an even greater expense to Kelsey-Seybold. Through the TeleVox system, the same contacts are made for a fraction of these costs.

Patient Satisfaction
Kelsey-Seybold has received great reports from patients regarding satisfaction with the TeleVox test results notification system. Mailed notifications previously took anywhere from five to ten days to reach patients. Now, lab results are delivered more quickly, relieving much of the anxiety associated with exams.

“Our patients really like the TeleVox system,” said Cecilia Fowler, Director of Ambulatory Care Operations for Kelsey-Seybold Clinic. “We are able to provide secure, convenient access to results and prevent much of the stress our patients experience when having labs done.”

Documentation
Another area of improvement has been in documenting notification of lab results pickup. TeleVox’s thorough reporting capabilities allow Kelsey-Seybold to note when each patient is contacted to retrieve lab results. These reports help provide an elevated level of patient care, as the clinic can ensure that each patient has been notified and no record is passed over.