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Weitzman Institute Study Demonstrates Electronic Consults

Improve Access to Cardiac Care for the Underserved

Newly Published Research Shows Positive Results

From Community Health Center's Groundbreaking Use of eConsults

MIDDLETOWN, Conn., March 9, 2016: Electronic consultations improve access to and timeliness of referrals for cardiac care for underserved populations, according to a [study](#) published this month in the *Annals of Family Medicine*. Organized and conducted by Community Health Center's Weitzman Institute, the study involved a randomized controlled trial of 36 primary care physicians at Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC), who referred 590 patients to cardiologists. Lead study authors were J. Nwando Olayiwola, MD, MPH, and Daren Anderson, MD, Director of the Weitzman Institute.

For two-thirds of patients referred for an eConsult, an appropriate treatment plan was developed and implemented without the need for a face to face visit with a cardiologist. Additionally, eConsults were completed more quickly than those sent for face-to-face consultations, (less than two days in most cases compared to 24 days for face to face) even for urgent referrals. The eConsults also appeared to reduce emergency room use and streamlined specialty referrals with no increase in adverse cardiovascular outcomes, according to the study.

"Access to specialty care is often limited, especially for medically underserved populations," the authors said in the study. "Obtaining appointments for these referrals is challenging because of the paucity of specialists willing to see them," and wait times for appointments can be as long as a year, they added.

"The results show that a substantial number of consultations can be safely and more efficiently managed through secure electronic exchange of information without compromising the quality of care and with improved convenience for the patient," the authors concluded.

A follow-up study is being conducted to examine the financial implications of electronic consultations.

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About Community Health Center, Inc.

Since 1972, Community Health Center, Inc. has been one of the leading healthcare providers in the state of Connecticut, building a world-class primary healthcare system committed to caring for uninsured and underserved populations. CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Recognized as both a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance and a Primary Care Medical Home by The Joint Commission, CHC delivers service in more than 200 locations statewide, offering primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services. For more information, visit www.chc1.com.

About The Weitzman Institute

The Weitzman Institute is the research and innovation arm of Community Health Center, Inc., dedicated to inspiring primary care innovation and improving health outcomes for the medically underserved. With its expertise in quality improvement, the Weitzman Institute is partnering with organizations around the globe to transform the primary care delivery system through research, training and education. For more information, visit www.weitzmaninstitute.org.