                           The Eggplant

**Valley Medical Group, P.C. Staff Newsletter           Vol. XVIII, Issue 5, Mar. 29, 2018**

Valley Medical Group has always tried to be out front in the use of new technology to help our patients and make our Practice more efficient. In this edition of *The Eggplant*, I want to tell you about a new collaboration between athenahealth and Apple that will allow our patients to get more convenient access to some of the information in their VMG Patient Portal accounts. This collaboration is also a small first step in allowing patients more complete access to their own information from all their healthcare providers.

**Athena and Apple Collaboration**

Athenahealth has been working to partner with other technology and information systems companies to make access to patient health information more convenient and portable. Apple, as you know, is a leader in portable communication technology (iPhone, anyone?). Apple has had a Health app on its iPhone for years now but most of its usability has always depended on patients inputting their health information manually - until now.

**VMG Participation in the Apple – athena Initiative**

VMG will participate, along with several major health systems, hospitals, and medical groups in this initiative (including Johns Hopkins, Cedars-Sinai, LA, Geisinger, Partners Healthcare and others). In the next few days patients who have an iPhone (that has been updated to the latest version of the IOS, 11.3) will be able to open the Health app, browse to health information, find VMG and choose "download records." The patients’ VMG information will then be available to view and share on their device in the Health app.

Patients will also be able to download their health information from other healthcare providers who are currently participating in this initiative (we don’t have a final list of those providers now but we believe that we are the only providers in Western Massachusetts participating).

**A few things to keep in mind**:

1. The only information from VMG that patients will be able to access and download is the information they already have available to them in their VMG Patient Portal.

2. There is no uploading data from the patient’s device into our records at VMG.

3. Patient’s will still have to use their Portal account to interact with VMG (e.g., request or make appointments, message their provider, etc.).

4. From Apple and athena: “*The benefit is that now, consumers will have medical information from various institutions organized into one view covering allergies, conditions, immunizations, lab results, medications, procedures and vitals, and will receive notifications when their data is updated.”*

For now, this collaboration only allows more convenient and portable access to VMG patient information that they already can get in their Portal. Of course if this works well, Apple, athena, and their provider collaborators like VMG may want to expand the capabilities of the app. We can discuss whether we want to participate in any expansion as it may become available.

Apple has released an announcement about this collaboration in a blogpost yesterday. Here’s a link from Apple describing the content, look, and feel of the app as well as a list of the current participants.

<https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2018/03/doctors-put-patients-in-charge-with-apples-health-records-feature/>

We will be providing additional information next week. If you have questions, please contact Martha Mastroberti.

Thanks,