

Promoting Civic Health through Patient Voter Registration

Authors : Amit Syal, Madeline Grade, Alister Martin

Abstract : Background: Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies demonstrate an association between health and voting. Furthermore, voting enables populations to support policies that impact their health via social determinants like income, education, housing, and healthcare access. Unfortunately, many barriers exist which disproportionately affect the civic participation of certain minority groups. Health professionals have an important role to play in addressing the civic health of all patients and empowering underrepresented communities. Description: Vot-ER is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that aims to reduce barriers to civic participation by helping patients register to vote while in healthcare settings. The initial approach involved iPad-based kiosks in the emergency department waiting rooms, allowing patients to register themselves while waiting. After the COVID-19 pandemic began, Vot-ER expanded its touchless digital approaches. Vot-ER provides healthcare workers across the country with “Healthy Democracy Kits” consisting of badge backers, posters, discharge paperwork, and other resources. These contain QR and text codes that direct users to an online platform for registering to vote or requesting a mail-in ballot, available in English or Spanish. Outcomes: From May to November 2020, Vot-ER helped prepare 46,320 people to vote. 13,192 individual healthcare providers across all 50 states signed up for and received Healthy Democracy Kits. 80 medical schools participated in the Healthy Democracy Campaign competition. Over 500 institutions ordered site-based materials. Conclusions: A healthy democracy is one in which all individuals in a community have equal and fair opportunities for their voices to be heard. Healthcare settings, such as hospitals, are appropriate and effective venues for increasing both voter registration and education.

Keywords : civic health, enfranchisement, physician, voting

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