



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

My HealthVet Users: Preliminary Evidence on Rural Reach and Usage

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Introduction

The My HealthVet (MHV) personal health record offers promise to improve communication between patient and provider, increase access to care and improve quality of care. Fully enrolled, or authenticated, users can refill and manage medications, track their health conditions, and research medical issues using this online portal. Tailored clinical reminders from the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) are now 'pushed' to MHV users. Additional recently implemented services include secure messaging to members of the VA health care team and the ability for authenticated users to view test results, appointments, and other portions of the medical record.

PURPOSE

Using data from an online survey of My HealthVet website visitors, this study describes patient users who reside at varying distances from the nearest VA facility.

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For more information about this study contact Carolyn Turvey, PhD, carolyn-turvey@uiowa.edu

Methods

From March 1, 2008 to October 31, 2008, My HealthVet queried site visitors about their satisfaction with and use of the website. Respondents were also asked how far they lived from a VA facility. Using American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) methodology, the survey was presented to a 4% random sample of users who viewed four or more pages. Surveys were presented to 351,176 MHV visitors and 60,641 (17.3%) were completed. This compares to a 6.5% mean response for other ForeSee client online surveys. Analysis was conducted on 28,258 respondents self-reporting as VA patients. Age distribution of MHV registrants and authenticated users were also compared to all VA patients.

Impact

My HealthVet is an important resource to increase access and improve care for VA patients.

- Improving use among rural Veterans will be increasingly important, particularly as MHV enhances its functionality.

Findings

- The age distribution of My HealthVet survey respondents was similar to that of all MHV registered users, but the survey respondents included a greater number of users aged 55 to 69.
- Among 28,258 VA patient respondents, 27,337 answered the *time to facility* question (97%). Just over half of this group lived within 1 hour and about one out of five lived over 1.5 hours away from a VA.
- Respondents who lived farther from a VA facility were similar to those living closer in terms of age, gender, self-reported Internet skills, proportion authenticated for MHV, frequency of login, and goals for visiting the website.
- Respondents living farther away from a facility rated their health as lower than those residing closer, and they were somewhat less likely to feel MHV improved their ability to manage their health.

Conclusions

This survey shows My HealthVet users to be fairly Internet-savvy. They largely represent aging “baby boomers” who login at least monthly and use the site to manage medications. Those living some distance from a VA appear to be using MHV in a similar manner to those residing closer. However, rural users rate their health as somewhat poorer and perceive MHV to provide lower value. Further research is needed to determine the reasons for this latter perception and whether greater support or education could improve chronic illness management through My HealthVet.

LIMITATIONS

Respondents may be more frequent MHV users with higher Internet skills than non-respondents.



Table 1. MHV Survey Responses, by Distance to VA Facility N=27,337

	< 1 hour	1 to < 1½ hours	1½ to < 2 hours	2 hours or more
	N=17651	N=5244	N=2387	N=2055
Age (%)				
<30 years	1%	1%	1%	1%
30 to <50 yrs	14%	13%	12%	14%
50 to 64 yrs	53%	55%	60%	57%
65 or more yrs	32%	31%	27%	29%
Gender				
Male (%)	92%	91%	91%	90%
Rating Your Health				
Excellent	5%	3%	3%	3%
Very Good	19%	16%	14%	13%
Good	39%	37%	35%	34%
Fair or Poor	37%	43%	48%	50%
Rating Internet Ability				
Beginner	3%	4%	4%	5%
Intermediate	29%	29%	29%	31%
Advanced	67%	66%	66%	64%
MHV Login Frequency*				
Daily or more	8%	7%	9%	8%
Weekly	29%	31%	31%	29%
Monthly	54%	54%	52%	53%
Six months or less	9%	8%	8%	8%
MHV improves ability to manage health				
Agree/strongly agree	67%	65%	63%	56%
Authenticated				
Fully enrolled in MHV	63%	63%	63%	61%
Intended task on MHV				
Rx refill	44%	44%	44%	43%
Find Rx information	10%	11%	11%	11%
Track health data	8%	8%	7%	7%
Research health issue	4%	4%	4%	4%

* First-time visitors are not included.

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Survey Respondents and My HealthVet Registrants, Compared to the VA Population

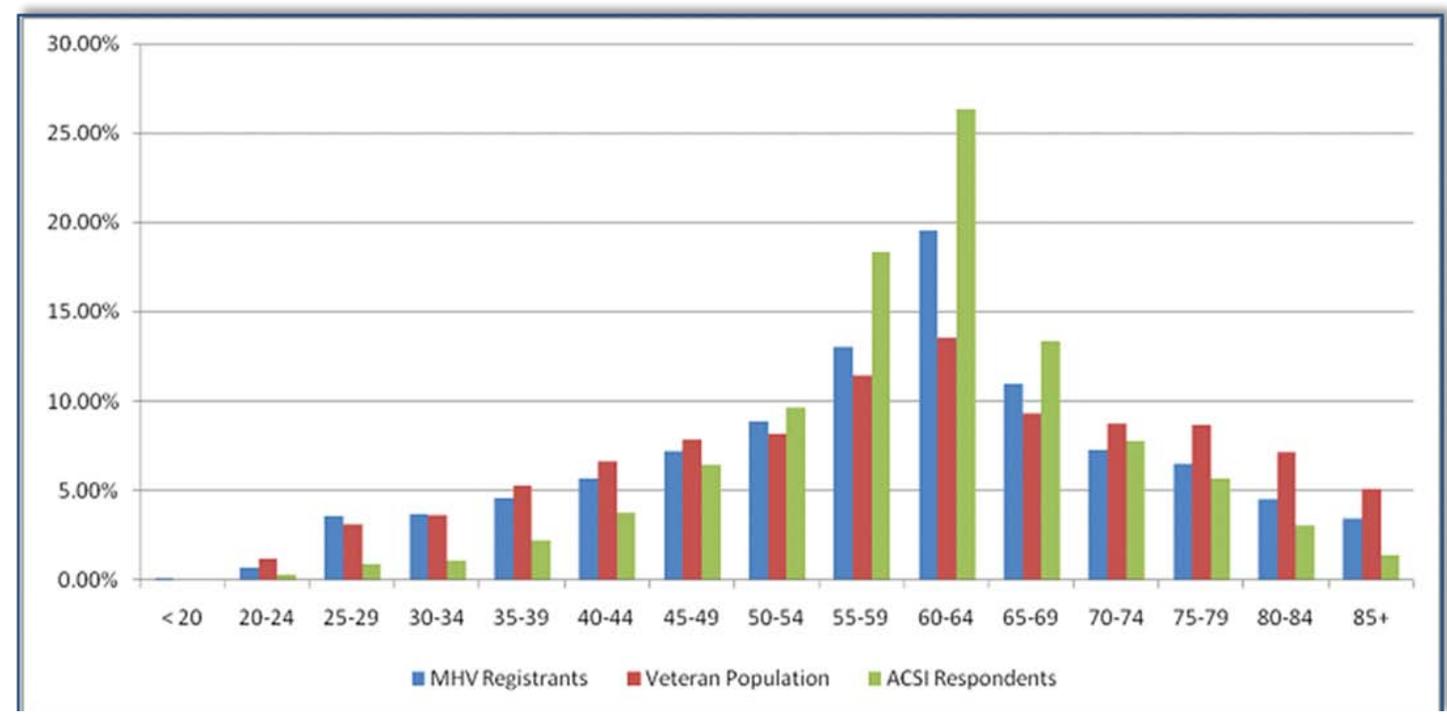


Figure 2. Survey Respondents' Distance to Nearest VA Facility N=27337

