BACKGROUND

Healthcare information technology (HIT) holds great promise for improving patient outcomes, increasing cost-effectiveness and both patient and staff satisfaction. However, implementation of HIT has been fraught with problems as organizations have struggled with the transition to e-health. Few settings experience this frustration more keenly than those that operate using a care delivery model that differs from the “normal” physician centered, medical model. One example of such a model is the nurse-managed, primary care clinic that coordinates patient services from a variety of health care professionals to deliver patient-centered care to populations that are medically under-served. Such nurse-managed care is likely to gain importance as the prevalence of chronic conditions requiring trans-disciplinary care increases in our society, especially among vulnerable populations, those who have little or no access to insurance-supported medical care.

METHODS

Initial data were collected in 53 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with patients at the Center (No identifiable data was collected). The interviews were tape-recorded for referential accuracy, and data are currently being analyzed for themes and patterns. In addition to the interviews, focus groups will be held to further explore key concepts identified from the interview data.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Access:

- 72% of survey respondents reported having access to the internet, slightly lower than the 77% reported by the 2009 Pew Internet & American Life survey for total adult internet access in the general population. [http://pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Whos-Online.aspx <accessed 2 Nov 2009>]
- Results suggest that cell phones are used more frequently than computers to access the internet, especially by women 25 - 34.

Use:

- 45% of the sample report to use a computer several times a day
- Barriers to use include having no computer/internet connection; not knowing how to use one and being frustrated with use.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do patients at the 11th Street Family Health Center access the internet?
- How do these patients use the internet?
- What barriers exist to internet access for these patients?