

# OpenNotes™ Frequently Asked Questions for OpenNotes Website

## General Information

Q. *What is the OpenNotes project?*

A. A research study that looks at what happens if doctors share their medical notes with their patients. In this study, patients will be able to see their notes through a website specially designed to house these records. This website is secure, and all medical records are kept confidential

Q. *What is a medical note?*

A. When a doctor sees a patient, they write a “clinic note” to summarize the patient’s visit. This “note” can include health concerns that are brought up during the doctor’s visit. It can also describe what the doctor finds during the physical exam, lab tests ordered, medicines prescribed, and the overall plan for taking care of the patient’s medical problems.

For more information about the clinic notes that doctors write, please click here (*insert hyperlink to full “What is a Note” document*).

Q. *What hospitals and clinics are participating in the OpenNotes trial?*

A. Participating institutions include:

- 1) Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Healthcare Associates (HCA), and Affiliated Physician Group (APG) sites in Boston, Massachusetts;
- 2) Geisinger Health Systems and Community Practice Sites in Central Pennsylvania; and
- 3) Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, Washington.

Q. *How many primary care doctors and patients will participate in the OpenNotes project?*

A. We expect between 75 and 130 primary care doctors and 25,000 to 45,000 patients to participate among all three sites.

Q. *How were patients chosen to see their notes?*

A. Because the 3 sites involved in this study are all different, patients were chosen differently at each site:

At Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, HCA and APG, patients must:

- 1) Be a patient of a participating primary care doctor;
- 2) Be 18 years of age at the time of doctor’s enrollment in the study;
- 3) Have a PatientSite portal account; and
- 4) Have logged into their PatientSite account in the past 2 years.

At Geisinger Health System and Community Practice Sites, patients must:

- 1) Be a patient of a primary care doctor who is enrolled in the study;
- 2) Be aged 18 years as of 12/31/2009;
- 3) Have signed up for a MyGeisinger portal account by 12/31/2009;
- 4) Have logged into their MyGeisinger account in the past 2 years; and
- 5) Not have any proxies to their MyGeisinger account.

At Harborview Medical Center, patients must:

- 1) Be a patient of a primary care doctor who is enrolled in the study;
- 2) Be 18 years of age or older at the time of doctor’s enrollment in the study;
- 3) Have been seen by their primary care doctor two or more times in the past 18 months;
- 4) Have an e-mail account and access to a computer;
- 5) Be able to read and converse in English; and
- 6) Sign an OpenNotes consent form, and complete an OpenNotes online survey.

Q. *How do patients find out if their primary care doctor is participating?*

A. A full list of participating physicians is can be found here (*add hyperlink to ON site’s list of PCPs*).

*Q. What happens if a patient cannot see his or her notes, or be asked to participate in the study, even if their primary care doctor is participating in the OpenNotes program and the patient fits all of the requirements to participate?*

A. Patients with questions about this should contact their doctor(s) or discuss at their next visit.

*Q. What happens if a patient switches primary care doctors in the middle of the study year? Will s/he be able to see his or her notes?*

A. There are many reasons that patients might change their doctor. For example, a doctor may retire or move. However, to make sure the study results are accurate, patients will not be able to see their notes if they switch to a new doctor during the study year. This is true even if they switch to another doctor who is part of the study.

*Q. How can patients who are not actively participating in OpenNotes still get involved?*

A. Patients, whether or not they can see their notes, can help the study in an important way. Patients over the age of 18 who have an account through their hospital's website can still help us learn about OpenNotes. They can answer a survey and share their ideas about gaining access to their doctor's notes. Please note that this option is not available at Harborview.

*Q. What happens at the end of the project?*

A. At the end of the project, two things will happen. First, patients will stop having access to their notes at the end of the 1-year period. At Harborview, patients will stop having access to *all* of their online medical records.

Second, we will send participating patients and doctors a second survey to ask doctors and patients about their experiences sharing the notes through the study. This will help us find out if patients and doctors want to continue using OpenNotes in the future.

## **For Participating Patients**

*Q. Why wasn't I asked to sign a consent form?*

A. At Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Geisinger Health System, when a doctor agrees to participate in OpenNotes, the doctor's patients are automatically enrolled as well. Patients do not need to sign a consent form because they "own" their medical records already.

At Harborview Medical Center, participants *will* be asked to sign a consent form. This is because they have not been able to see any of their medical records online before enrolling in this study.

*Q. What notes will I see and how long will I be able to see them?*

A. At Beth Israel and Geisinger, patients will have access to their primary care doctor's notes from the day their doctor enrolls in the study for **one entire year** (365 days). At Harborview, patients will have access to their doctor's notes from the day they enroll in the study. They will only have access to notes from their own primary care doctor. No patient will have access to notes from Nurse Practitioners, Physician's Assistants, Specialists, or Residents. They are not included in this study.

\*Note: At Harborview Medical Center, patients will also gain access to their lab results, radiology, pathology, and cardiology information. Harborview patients should contact their doctor if they have questions about any information found in their online medical records.

\*Note: At Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Geisinger Health System, physician fellows will not be participating in this study.

*Q. I'm having trouble seeing my notes. What should I do?*

A. If you have received a message in your electronic medical record portal letting you know that you have a note available but cannot see it, please contact your health institution's technical support center (contact information below).

If you have not received a message in your electronic medical record portal about a new note, please be patient until it arrives. A message will be sent to you after the note has been finished and signed by your primary care doctor. Doctors do not have a time limit as to when they have to finish their notes.

Q. *I have questions or concerns about something I read in my notes. Who should I talk to?*

A. Please contact your doctor or discuss at your next visit.

Q. *If I switch primary care physicians, can I still see my notes?*

A. No. You cannot see your notes if you change your primary care doctor for any reason once you have been enrolled in the study. This is true even if your new doctor is enrolled in the study.

Q. *How long after my visit will I be able see my notes?*

A. Doctors have not been given any deadlines for when the notes need to be finished. Not all doctors sign their notes the same day as the patient's appointment. Doctors must approve a final version of their notes before you can see them. The amount of time between your visit and when your notes are ready will vary by doctor.

If your doctor tells you that your note has been approved, and you still cannot see your note, please contact your hospital's technical support center (contact info is below).

Q. *I've tried to contact my primary care physician about my notes but haven't heard back. When can I expect a response?*

A. Response times will vary by doctor. **If your message is regarding a medical emergency, please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.**

Q. *What will I be asked to do for the study?*

A. If you choose to be a part of the study, and meet the criteria listed above, you will be asked to fill out an online survey. This survey will ask you what your opinions are about seeing your doctor's notes. For the next twelve months, you will be able to log into your account and view your doctor's notes at any time. At the end of the twelve-month period, you will be asked to fill out another online survey. This second survey will ask about your experiences viewing your doctor's notes online.

Q. *My doctor is enrolled in OpenNotes, but I don't want to see my notes online. How can I stop participating in the project?*

A. Please note that after withdrawing from the study, you will not receive any more messages from OpenNotes.

In addition, at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Geisinger Health System, you will no longer have access to the OpenNotes section of your medical records. You will not be able to see any of your past or future notes.

At Harborview, if you have consented to be a part of the study and then change your mind, you will no longer have access to *any* of your online medical records. After leaving the study, you cannot enroll in the study again.

To leave the study:

**Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center Participants:**

Please click here (*add email hyperlink*) to send our study manager an email with your request.

**Geisinger Health Systems Participants:**

Please click here (*add hyperlink to MyGeisinger homepage*) to go to the MyGeisinger homepage. Log in to your MyGeisinger account and go to the FAQ page. The link to withdraw for the study will be under the question "Q. *My doctor is enrolled in OpenNotes, but I don't want to see my notes online. How can I stop participating in the project?*"

**Harborview Medical Center Participants:**

Please contact OpenNotes staff at [HMCnotes@uw.edu](mailto:HMCnotes@uw.edu) to request withdrawal from the study. Please email only if you had previously agreed to be a part of the study (by signing an OpenNotes consent form and taking the survey). If you had not gone through the consent process, then you are not enrolled in the OpenNotes study.

**Technical Troubleshooting**

Q. *I logged into my online medical records, but I don't see my doctor's notes (or an OpenNotes section). What should I do?*

A. Please contact your institution's technical support center (contact information is below).

**For this and all other technical questions, please contact your health institution's technical support center:**

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Information Services Technical Support:

Please call 617-754-8080 or email [issupport@bidmc.harvard.edu](mailto:issupport@bidmc.harvard.edu)

Geisinger Health Systems:

Please click here (***add hyperlink to MyGeisinger homepage***) to go to the MyGeisinger homepage. Log in to your MyGeisinger account and click on "Help" link at the top right of the page, then click on "Contact Us". Be sure to specify that you are having an OpenNotes-related problem.

Harborview Medical Center: Please email [HMCnotes@uw.edu](mailto:HMCnotes@uw.edu) or call .

### **Survey Questions**

Q. *I can't log into my survey. Who do I contact?*

A. Please contact your site's technical support center (contact info below).

Q. *Can I complete the survey in more than one sitting?*

A. No, the survey must be completed all at once. If you log out or the computer crashes you will need to restart the survey.

### **Contact Information**

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center:

Information Services Technical Support: 617-754-8080

Please click here (***add email hyperlink***) to email the BIDMC OpenNotes study manager.

Geisinger Health System:

Please click here (***add hyperlink to MyGeisinger homepage***) to go to the MyGeisinger homepage. Log in to your MyGeisinger account and click on "Help" link at the top right of the page, then click on "Contact Us". Be sure to specify that you are having an OpenNotes-related problem in your message.

Harborview Medical Center:

Open Notes Staff: [HMCnotes@uw.edu](mailto:HMCnotes@uw.edu)

IT Technical Support: