Examining potential safety concerns secondary to deficits in system integration in a public specialty mental health clinic

What we know
- Patients with severe mental illness have high rates of co-occurring health conditions.
- Integrated care may improve health outcomes for SMI patients.
- San Mateo Health has many EHRs across systems with poor integration. (Chart 1)
- In previous studies:
  - 72% of behavioral health records correctly identified a patient’s medical home even if they have ICM.
  - Only 68% of psychiatric medications were acknowledged by the primary care provider at next visit following a psych visit.

What we want to know
- Are psychiatrists recording all the medications documented by PCP at a psychiatric intake?
- Do patients’ allergies match across different EHRs?
- Evaluate provider usage of San Mateo Health Information Exchange (HIE), a system that integrates information from different EHRs.

What we did
- Mixed study design: retrospective chart review & provider satisfaction survey about HIE.
- Setting: South County Clinic is an adult specialty mental health clinic in San Mateo, CA.
- Study groups: medications (n=13), allergies (n=38), HIE Survey Response n= 22.
- Analysis: matching record = ALL medications or allergies are listed in EHRs being compared.

What we found
- 8% of patients’ psych intake noted all medications that were on their PCP note (Figure 1).
- 13% of patients had allergies that matched across four EHRs (Figure 2, Table 1).
- 77% of providers have heard of HIE but only 41% have used it and 9% have used it within the last 3 months; majority reported that HIE was not helpful.
- Found an excessive amount of Tylenol allergies in data, suspect system error.

What does this mean for our system
- Poor information continuity between different EHRs have the potential to cause harm.
- Previous solutions (e.g., HIE) invested by the County have not been helpful.
- Lack of provider training and technical constraints may contribute to the issue.
- Limitations of our study include small sample size and use of data from only one clinic.
- Moving to a more integrated EHR may improve information exchange, safety, and delivery of care.