A scoping review to explore the suitability of interactive voice response to conduct automated performance measurement of the patient's experience in primary care

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Introduction: Practice-based performance measurement is fundamental for improvement and accountability in primary care. Traditional performance measurement of the patient's experience is often too costly and cumbersome for most practices. **Objective/Methods:** This scoping review explores the literature on the use of interactive voice response (IVR) telephone surveys to identify lessons for its use for collecting data on patient-reported outcome measures at the primary care practice level. **Results:** The literature suggests IVR could potentially increase the capacity to reach more representative patient samples and those traditionally most difficult to engage. There is potential for long-term cost effectiveness and significant decrease of the burden on practices involved in collecting patient survey data. Challenges such as low response rates, mode effects, high initial set-up costs and maintenance fees, are also reported and require careful attention. **Conclusion:** This review suggests IVR may be a feasible alternative to traditional patient data collection methods, which should be further explored.

Key words: clinical competence; family practice; interactive voice response; patient satisfaction; primary health care; quality assurance, health care; quality indicators, health care; review; scoping review; speech recognition software

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Introduction

There are growing demands for accountability and a recognized need for constant quality

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improvement (QI) in primary care practices (Government of Ontario, 2012). Performance measurement is often used to identify and address strengths and weaknesses through data collection and the provision of feedback (Simpson and Birdshell, 2006; WHO, 2008). However traditional methods of data collection, particularly those measuring patient-reported outcomes, can be laborious and costly and many primary care practices lack the time and resources to implement



them (Stroebel et al., 2005; Parker et al., 2007; Ivers et al., 2012; Creswell, 2013). Thus for tools to be applicable to primary care settings they must cater to practice capabilities and concerns and also be efficient, minimally disruptive, and cost effective (Stroebel et al., 2005; Parker et al., 2007; Government of Ontario, 2012; Ivers et al., 2012). In looking for such methods, we conducted a scoping review of the literature on automated performance measurement (APM) through the use of interactive voice response technology (IVR), in order to assess lessons for its potential use in primary care health services research. For this review APM is defined, using elements from two sources, as: the use of telephones to administer computer-driven surveys, utilizing computerized or pre-recorded voices and touch tone response or speech recognition, to gather performance data (Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Shaw and Verma, 2007). We specifically sought to identify the benefits and challenges in using an IVR approach (that includes any type of IVR system using a telephone only) to APM to determine feasibility for primary care practices' quality improvement efforts and practice-based research studies.

Methods

In order to broadly explore this technology, we adopted a scoping review method outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and Levac et al. (2010). Our goal was to identify relevant lessons from published literature on the potential of an emerging technology, automated interactive voice response surveys, for primary care health services research and practice-based quality improvement. We sought all relevant literature regardless of study design, to record the approach used, and main findings, both broad and specific. We searched the MEDLINE database from the year 2000 to 2013 using keywords related to interactive voice response, performance measurement, and primary care. A list of the search terms and combined searches may be found in Appendix. International articles reporting the use of IVR for any reason in any health care practice setting were included if they were research studies or literature reviews. Articles were excluded if they were not published in English, contained a non-health care-related research question, the abstract was not available

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through Medline, or their interactive voice response systems were not conducted through the telephone.

M.F. ran the search and screened the titles and abstracts for meeting the inclusion criteria. Included articles at this stage underwent full text review by M.F. Their references were also reviewed for relevant sources. Articles were assessed for relevance to use of IVR for health care performance measurement such as applicable methods or population, as only a limited number addressed performance measurement specifically. Articles discussing interactive voice response survey technology in other health care contexts outside of primary care were also included to broaden the search. Included articles underwent in depth review and data extraction, the rest were excluded following initial review because they were not relevant to IVR and automated performance measurement.

Studies using IVR for a broad range of functions such as health intervention, follow-up calls, disease management, health education, and health databases were analysed alongside performance measurement articles due to a lack of data specifically on performance measurement. We extracted data from included studies on study goals, population/ context, method of IVR implementation, type of IVR administration (call in/call out), survey questions, response rates, number of follow-up calls required, data quality, cost information, and factors reported as facilitating or hindering integration into a clinical practice. Descriptive data from each article was analysed by M.F., S.J., and W.H. to identify lessons for the use of interactive voice response technology for performance measurement in primary care. We identified common findings across studies, and paid attention to disconfirming results and areas requiring further investigation. To promote the rigour of the study, our analysis team was multidisciplinary including two clinician primary care health services researchers and one non clinician health systems researcher. Further we presented our early analysis findings to several health services researchers and an information technology expert in the field of IVR incorporating feedback into our ongoing assessment of relevance to primary care. We synthe sized the main findings relevant for primary care, based on recurrence between studies and/or the impact or potential impact for performance measurement. These are presented under categories in the result section.

Results

The initial search retrieved 1987 articles, 123 of which were selected for full text review. 10 additional sources were added after searching the references of included articles. In all, 33 articles were included for in depth review and data extraction. A summarized figure of the search results is shown in Figure 1.

A total of 33 articles were included in our search and addressed interactive voice response

technology use in health care but very few specifically addressed primary care and performance measurement. Five studies utilized IVR for collection of patient satisfaction data while 14 studies used IVR alongside patient services such as monitoring and education. Multiple study types were reviewed, including 14 randomized controlled studies, other experimental designs, observational studies, and systematic reviews. Five studies were literature reviews of IVR or related technologies. The studies used diverse methods,

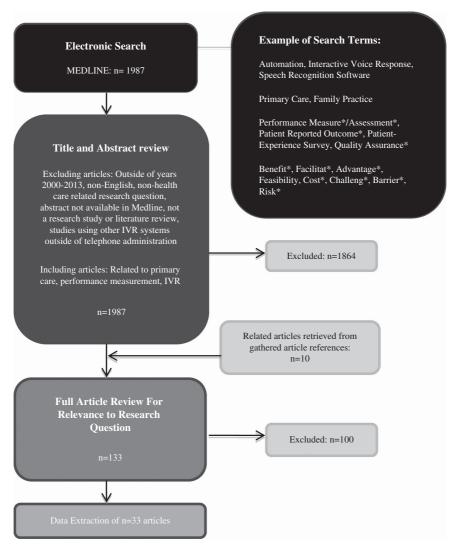


Figure 1 Scoping review

sample populations, implementations of IVR, and outcomes measures. In all, 27 studies had sample populations ranging from 36 to 58 440, with a total of 117 692 participants across all studies reviewed. An additional study included three practices as their sample population and the remainder of studies were literature reviews. All studies were set in the United States except for one that was conducted in Canada by Reid et al. (2007).

This section presents the results most pertinent to the topic of interactive voice response for automated performance measurement. The following tables present brief summaries of each source grouped by study focus. Table 1 summarizes the methods and relevant findings of studies specifically evaluating IVR survey methods. Table 2 summarizes the findings of studies which combined IVR surveys with another intervention. The articles detailing technological specifications or implementation issues are summarized in Table 3. The studies investigating mode effect are described in Table 4, and Table 5 presents the literature reviews on this topic. Highly relevant or commonly reported aspects of IVR surveys are presented below.

IVR features

Several sources discussed the multiple features that interactive voice response technology provides. IVR can reach multiple simultaneous participants, across a wide geographic spread, in multiple languages and accents, and most people own and know how to use a phone (Stuart et al., 2003; Brodey et al., 2005; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Estabrooks et al., 2009; Oake et al., 2009; Dalal et al., 2010; Lundy and Coons, 2012; Skolarus et al., 2012). IVR may use computerized voice or pre-recorded messages, can ask multiple choice and open-ended questions, and can randomize participants to receive different messages or survey questions (Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Welker, 2007; Willig et al., 2013). IVR allows skipping and branching of irrelevant questions to save participant time and can call-out to patients during specific time intervals or allow patients to call-in at their own convenience (Lee *et al.*, 2003; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Shaw and Verma, 2007; Naylor et al., 2008; Shea et al., 2008). Finally IVR technology can be integrated with databases and enter information directly into tables and graphs (Aharonovich et al., 2012).

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Data quality

IVR produced data quality comparable to other modes in multiple studies (Weiler et al., 2004; Shea et al., 2008; Dalal et al., 2010; Skolarus et al., 2012; Houser et al., 2013). Mode effects due to the telephone delivery method and automated nature of IVR were experienced in some studies, as respondents were found more likely to choose the extreme categories (Rodriguez et al., 2006; Dillman et al., 2009). Some participants became frustrated by the survey pace causing them to 'satisfice', selecting the first available answer to move on to the next question, which biased results (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2006). In contrast, recency effects may result when the participant remembers the last answer choice read out, due to it being heard most recently, and is more prone to pick it as a result (Dillman et al., 2009).

IVR was used effectively to reach diverse populations and hard to reach patient samples such as the visually impaired, illiterate, lower education, and non-English speaking patients. However, studies noted that those with hearing impairment may have difficulty participating in a phone survey and some populations may not trust reporting information to a machine (Stuart et al., 2003; Brodey et al., 2005; Goldman et al., 2008; Naylor et al., 2008; Dalal et al., 2010; Rose et al., 2010a; 2010b; Graham et al., 2012; Skolarus et al., 2012).

Sources suggested that to achieve good data quality installers need to carefully consider variables of speech recognition such as sensitivity of speech, risks of words being misrecognized, poor audio quality such as echoes, poor telephone service, and that phones encourage the use of shorter rating scales and simplified wording (Welker, 2007; Dillman et al., 2009; Skolarus et al., 2012; Willig et al., 2013).

Costs

Multiple sources cited IVR technology as a feasible tool for practices and though there is a substantial initial expense, it is balanced against low incremental costs and long term savings (Janda et al., 2001; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Piette et al., 2008; Oake et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2010a; Houser et al., 2013; Willig et al., 2013). Initial expenses included paying for: the system, programming, script creation, technical support

Table 1 IVR methods and findings from included studies relevant to potential use for primary care patient-reported outcome measures

Author	Year	Study goals	Population and sample size	Setting	Design	Call in or call out	IVR response rate	Number of follow up contacts	Data quality	Cost/Ease of integration
Dillman <i>et al.</i>	2009	Investigated mixed mode designs including mail, telephous, IVR, and the internet. Studied improving response by changing to another mode	Individuals with a known long distance provider n = 8999	Households	Satisfaction survey Randomized controlled trial	Call out, live interviewer asked one question then changed to IVR	28%	Follow-up with a live call	IVR chose extreme positive category more often than mail and web Recency/ primacy affects	\$2 cash incentive with the mail request
Isenburg et al.	2001	Feasibility of digital patient outcome data collection using web and IVR	Practitioners and patients n = 77 practitioners n = 998 patients	Medical and surgical practices	Patient outcome survey	Patients visiting clinic were given instructions to call into	3 trials: 27.7%, 12.8%, 34.8%			20 min prepaid phone card incentive to full completion of the IVR
Rodriguez et al.	2006	Tested and compared Mail, Web and IVR approaches for evaluating patient experience	Adult patients from a panel of 62 primary care physicians $n=9126$	Primary care	Randomized controlled trial, modified ambulatory care experiences survey	Participants received the invitation by mail and were told to call in	34.70%	Second invitation letter sent at one week, a third at three weeks	IVR mode effect, systematically lower results compared with other modes modes satisficing	Mail was less expensive than web and IVR Mail-\$5.19 per unique response versus IVR \$9.04 for pure, \$8.04 for mixed mode samples Used crossover response rates
Shea <i>et al.</i>	2008	Compared IVR, illustrated, and print versions of a survey	Patients 18 or older Medicaid or Medicare health plan, English or Spanish $n = 6815$	Primary care	Patient satisfaction survey Randomized controlled trial	Participants received instrument by mail and were instructed to call in	18.10%	Two contacts by mail followed by six calls from a live interviewer	Data quality was better for IVR because it controlled the question options	\$10 incentive for participation
Tourangeau, Couper and Steiger	2003	Investigated how social interface influenced response, compared six versions of IVR	Population selected via random digit dialling $n=25000$	Households	Compared six versions of an IVR Interview survey	Call out by live interviewer then switched to IVR	26.20%	40.9% answered the phone 64% of these completed the questions		Many participants hung up during the switch between live and IVR or immediately after entering the system
IVR = intera	active	IVR = interactive voice response.								

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Table 2 IVR methods and relevant findings from included studies which paired IVR with another intervention

Author	Year	Study goals	Population and sample size	Setting	Design	Call in or call out	IVR response rate	Number of follow up contacts	Data quality	Cost/ease of integration
Aharonovich et al.	2012	Used IVR for intervention to reduce non-ripection drug use in INV primary care patients	Inclusion: HIV positive, English/ Spanish, 18 and older, iargely included disadvantaged backgrounds, unstable housing, minorities n = 40	Primary care	IVR for automated health calls Randomized controlled trial	Patients given a watch with an alarm set as a reminder to call into the system	85% retention at 30 days, 79% at 60 days	Patients completed 4 min daily health calls into the system	Data entered directly into graphs	Reduced staff hours Some felt calling in was annoying and difficult to remember
Bender <i>et al.</i>	2010	Tested IVR to improve adherence to medication in adults with asthma	Patients aged 18–65 who had a physician diagnosis of asthma and prescription for a daily inhaled corticosteroid n = 50	Recruited through newspaper advertising and cooperation with community allergy practice	Automated health calls providing information and reminders Randomized controlled trial	Call out, toll free number left on answering machine	100%	Needed to complete two calls over one month all participants listened to health information provided No indication of how many calls were required to reach them		Increased adherence to medication guidelines
Estabrooks et al.	2009	Evaluated effectiveness of three interventions to assist parents of overweight children	Parents and children (8–12) days	Care setting	Randomized controlled trial	Patients could call in, system would also call out at specific times	80% at six months 74% at 12 months	10 automated counseling sessions over one year		Completion of 6/10 WR calls had greatest decrease in BMI compared with other method
Graham <i>et al.</i>	2012	Investigated use of a monitoring system in primary care to reduce emergency room visits and readmissions among case- managed patients	Patients recently discharged from the hospital $n=3772$	Primary care	NR surveys for a 30-day post hospital transition period Post parallel quasiexperimental design	IVR Call out	%96 %96	One IVR call per week over a month IVR was programmed to automatically retry calls if it was unsuccessful		patient, did not replace all traditional contact but helped extend reach for the intervention and lowered case manager burden Calls took 2-3 min to complete versus 30-min traditional calls from clerical staff 44% less likely to readmit if they were case managed and participated in IVR
Greaney <i>et al.</i>	2012	Tested IVR and text to improve health behaviors alongside an intervention	Adult patients with scheduled visit appointments $n=598$	Primary care	Using electronic reminders for cancer prevention Randomized controlled trial	IVR Call out reminders				About 2/3 preferred IVR to SMS reminders

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Author	Year	Study goals	Population and sample size	Setting	Design	Call in or call out	IVR response rate	Number of follow up contacts	Data quality	Cost/ease of integration
Houser et al.	2013	IVR calls for follow-up	Primary care/acute patients n = 539 (patients called and not called completed satisfaction survey)	Ambulatory care	Two cohorts, one receiving human calls, one receiving IVR Meta-analysis	IVR call out	89%		No differences between live staff and IVR	Patients overall thought follow-up was a good idea, positive toward both live interviewer or VR with no significant difference
Kemp et al.	2012	IVR to outreach and improve colorectal screening	Patients at risk or presenting with colorectal cancer n = 58 440	Outreach intervention	Quasi experimental design, provided education on colorectal screening	IVR call out	17%	3000 IVR calls were sent out per week form April to mid- September 2008		Sent IVR call then mailed a screening kit This group had almost four times higher screening rate compared with usual care, reached those not visiting the practice
Naylor et al.	2008	Used therapeutic IVR to decrease chronic pain and improve coping	Subjects with chronic musculoskeletal pain $n=114$	Care setting	Therapeutic IVR Randomized controlled trial	Patients had to call in and complete a daily monitoring questionnaire Patients were also able to a access additional health information	100%	Intervention provided over four months		Significant improvement in scores in the IVR group versus no improvement in patients using the policities and kept improve, did not relapse and kept improving four months after the tool was implemented was implemented suggest it is a cost effective addition to any health care program
Reid et al.	2007	IVR response follow-up for smokers recently hospitalized with Coronary Heart Disease	Smokers over the age of 18 n = 99	Hospital	Asked smoking- related questions, provided educational material and motified a nurse- specialist if patients indicated relapse risk Randomized controlled trial	IVR call out	70% at three days, 72% at 14 days, 68% at 30 days	About two calls per participant 18 received all calls, 21 received two, nine received one, two received none		1.6 odds of quitting in IVR group versus usual care, 32% cessation increase at one year

Table 2 Continued

Cost/ease of integration	IVR was programmed and setup by an initial vender, followed by monthly fees IVR is feasible in a busy PC setting and acceptable to patients One IVR system can support a number of practices	Positive feedback from patients and providers lowers the need for staff and did not interfere with patient-provider interaction	IVR reduced staffing requirements but due to low response it was necessary for live interviewers to be used to contact participants later bost savings of ~100\$ per IVR call in reduced hours of live interviewers \$25 incentive for participation	Provided more systematic reporting and symptom assessment, without staff increase	Costs associated with writing the script, system development, programming, support personnel Used live telephone operators for recruitment Patients would rather receive calls
Data quality			No differences in data between IVR and live interviewing	Data quality similar to other modes, more likely to provide embarrassing information	
Number of follow up contacts	1/3 of calls were made outside of regular dinic hours		Live telephone call five days after non-response to IVE The majority of patients called in at day time (8am to 5pm) (60%) 34%-5pm to 10pm, 1%(6-8) early morning hours	Multiple calls attempted over three days at 11:30pm, 5:30pm, and 5:30pm 5:30pm 5:30pm completed it Completed it Completed it were answered after two attempts	25 calls over three months
IVR response rate	26%	%96	35.60%	87.50%	%09
Call in or call out	Patients asked to call in to receive the IVR brief interviewing intervention	Conducted using a dedicated phone in the waiting room	Participants were mailed the number and instructed to call in	Live interviewer called out to patients and then switched to IVR	Patients were educated by unsting staff and instructed to call into the system
Design	IVR for screening and support Comparative study	IVR for screening and support Comparative Study	Questions aimed to track improvements for back function Prospective cohort study	Completed written version in office, then IVR two days after Comparative study	Randomized controlled trial, IVR for education and support
Setting	Primary care	Primary care	Occupational health clinic	University-based cancer center clinic	Primary care
Population and sample size	Patients presenting for an office visit n = 188	Patients presenting for an office visit n = 101	Working adults, Age range 18–80 n = 547	Prostate cancer patients, median age 63, range 41-77 n = 40	Patients newly prescribed antidepressant medications $n=647$
Study goals	Developed a brief interviewing interviewing intervention using IVR to deliver alcohol screening and brief intervention in primary care	Automated screening for at risk drinking using IVR in a primary care office	Tested the equivalency of IVR to other modes for home assessment of back pain and function	Tested the feasibility of IVR to monitor prostate cancer survivors through survey assessment	Evaluated three different strategies including IVR to increase patient compliance with antidepressant medication
Year	2010	2010	2007	2012	2003
Author	Rose <i>et al.</i> (A)	Rose <i>et al.</i> (B)	Shaw and Verma	Skolarus <i>et al.</i>	Stuart et al.

IVR = interactive voice response.

Table 3 Studies detailing IVR technological specifications and/or implementation issues	Table 3 Studie Author Ariza et al.	Year 2004	IVR technological specification of the standard computer canabilities in a	cations and/or implem Population Members of Pediatric practice	Setting Practice settings	Design Questionnaire to
Year Study goals Population Setting				-	b	
Table 3 Studies detailing IVR technological specifications and/or implementation issues	Table 3 Studie	s detailing	IVR technological specifi	cations and/or implem	nentation issues	
Year Study goals Population Setting	Ariza et al.	2004	Evaluated computer	Members of	Practice settings	Questionnaire to
Year Study goals Population Setting [2004 Evaluated computer Members of Practice settings (capabilities in a	Pediatric practice		assess electronic

Author	Year	Study goals	Population	Setting	Design	Cost/ease of integration/ implementation issues
Ariza et al.	2004	Evaluated computer capabilities in a primary care practice-based research network	Members of Pediatric practice research group n = 96 offices and 194 pediatricians	Practice settings	Questionnaire to assess electronic systems in practice	Privacy concerns Insufficient training with technology
Goldman <i>et al.</i>	2008	Qualitative study explored the best ways to develop IVR tool for diabetes management	Patients with diabetes $n = 36$	Primary care	In-depth telephone interviews with qualitative analysis	Positive attitudes toward IVR Felt it would be beneficial for multiple functions but would prefer a live physician
Janda <i>et al.</i>	2001	Used IVR test & survey program to facilitate setup and data collection of IVR	IVR for researchers in a variety of contexts $n=100$		Describes IVR test and survey	\$\\$\text{EASE 2800\$}\text{Artisoft 1400} \$\\$-\text{both require} programming knowledge Cost based on number of phone lines, four line capability New package not requiring programming knowledge: 4 lines-\$3300 must be integrated with a database that stores voice prompts Could outsource to a company 40\$ per respondent and testing fees
Willig <i>et al.</i>	2013	IVR feedback for follow-up and feedback in primary care	Patients presenting for an office visit n = 3 primary care clinics	Primary care	Data entered into EMR while in practice and an IVR follow-up happened one week after the acute care visit	IVR is feasible Variability in technology at each site Important to understand the specifics of technology at each site

IVR = interactive voice response; EMR = electronic medical record.

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Table 4	tudies	Studies investigating mode effects	node effects							
Author	Year	Study goals	Population	Setting	Design	Call in or call out	IVR response rate	Number of follow-up contact	Data quality	Cost/ease of integration
Brodey <i>et al.</i>	2005	Reliability and acceptability of IVR versus paper among Spanish and English seeking mental health services recipients	Low income population Spanish and English n = 107	Mental health services	Patient satisfaction survey Randomized controlled trial	Surveys completed in practice	%86	Surveyed three times, one week apart	IVR is reliable	\$5.00 incentive for the first survey \$15 for second and third
Dalal <i>et al.</i>	2010	IVR versus other modes for lung function questionnaire	Smoking patients aged 40 or older $n=149$	Primary care	Multicenter, prospective, noninterventional data-collection study Randomized controlled trial	Two study visits, completed paper then alternative mode that included IVR			No significant differences between paper and alternate modes	
Lundy and Coons	2012	Assess test- retest ability of IVR patient- reported outcome survey	Cancer survivors n = 127	Cancer clinic	Two administrations of the survey spaced two days apart	Mailed instructions and had to call in	77.9% completed both surveys	Recruiters called prior to promote completion of questionnaire if there was a delay	Substantial evidence that IVR scores are reliable on repeat administration	20\$ gift card
Sikorskii <i>et al.</i> 2009	. 2009	IVR versus live telephone Investigating mode effects	Cancer patients n = 386	Cancer clinic	Randomized controlled trial, Patient symptom reporting	Call out	85%	Six contacts over eight weeks	Higher reporting of symptom severity using IVR	
Weiler <i>et al.</i>	2004	Compare data collection of IVR versus paper	Adults with allergic rhinitis n = 87	Single- center, three-way cross over study	Patient reported outcome data Participants completed paper version, diary card for one week, IVR for one week, or both concurrently for one week Randomized controlled trial	Call in	63% of data collected within within times, 87.6 collected within one half-day	Data collected twice a day (morning and evening) for three weeks	Paper based versus IVR data was indistinguishable	75\$ incentive for participation in the study 85% preferred paper, 4% preferred IVR, 11% no preference
IVR = inter-	active	IVR = interactive voice response.								

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Table 5 Literature reviews on IVR

Author	Year	Study goals
Abu-Hasaballah <i>et al.</i>	2007	Reviewed lessons/challenges of IVR
Lee et al.	2003	Reviewed IVR in Health services
Oake <i>et al.</i>	2009	Described studies using IVR with clinical interventions
Piette et al.	2008	Reviewed health information technology to support diabetes management
Welker	2007	Reviewed implementation of electronic data capture systems

IVR = interactive voice response.

staff, and hardware for data storage (Stuart et al., 2003; Ariza et al., 2004; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007). Janda et al. (2001) listed two programs that required programming knowledge to use, EASE (2800\$) and Artisoft (1400\$). Another package by VOS (\$3300) did not require programming knowledge. Furthermore an outsourced company could be used for 40\$ per respondent (Janda et al., 2001); Graham et al. (2012) reported that IVR calls were 25\$ per patient. Shaw and Verma (2007) found cost savings of 100\$ per IVR call compared with a live interviewer. However, Rodriguez et al. (2006) reported that a mailed survey was cheaper than IVR in their study and IVR costs increased when low response rates required crossover mailing. Lower response rates in some studies created a need to supplement IVR with other formats to improve response rates, which can incur additional expenses (Stuart et al., 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2006; Shaw and Verma, 2007; Dillman et al., 2009).

Some studies used the technology for service delivery or clinical care including for monitoring health outcomes, reminders, interventions and disease management (Reid et al., 2007; Goldman et al., 2008; Naylor et al., 2008; Sikorskii et al., 2009; Bender et al., 2010; Kempe et al., 2012; Greaney et al., 2012; Houser et al., 2013). The cost was part of health care delivery, often eliminating the need for a member of the health care team to carry out the task.

Response rate

Low response rates (around 30%) were observed when studies focused solely on survey administration (Isenberg et al., 2001; Tourangeau et al., 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2006; Shea et al., 2008; Dillman et al., 2009). Aside from two sources, much higher response rates were usually observed and sustained over longer periods when IVR questions were paired with interventions (Table 2). For example, a 79% response rate was observed in an intervention to reduce noninjection drug use (Aharonovich et al., 2012) and there was a 74% response rate at 12 months in an IVR study that aided in a weight loss intervention (Estabrooks et al., 2009).

Many studies sought survey recruitment and patient consent using a different format such as mail, a live phone call, or were recruited during a visit to the practice and expected to call into the system (Stuart et al., 2003; Shea et al., 2008; Aharonovich et al., 2012). Patient thoughts on such approaches throughout the process indicated annoyance with having to call into the IVR system and noted that they would rather receive calls (Stuart et al., 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2006; Aharonovich *et al.*, 2012); it is possible to combine both call in and call out methods to further accessibility (Estabrooks et al., 2009).

Several studies reported strategies to improve response rates including: brief calls, call-in lines for additional time, pre-recorded voices, money incentives, calling cards, draw prizes, medical information, instructions, reminders, feedback, physician endorsements, indicators of practice improvement, and use of caller ID and statements to distinguish from telemarketing calls (Isenberg et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2003; Brodey et al., 2005; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Shaw and Verma, 2007; Welker, 2007; Goldman et al., 2008; Aharonovich et al., 2012; Skolarus, 2012; Willig et al., 2013).

Ease of integration of IVR with clinical practice

Once installed, IVR caused little disruption to normal practice functioning in several circumstances (Stuart et al., 2003; Bender et al., 2010;

Rose *et al.*, 2010b; Willig *et al.*, 2013). Studies also noted that the integration of IVR into a database allowed for timely, accurate information, and decreased staff hours (Lee *et al.*, 2003; Shaw and Verma, 2007; Goldman *et al.*, 2008; Naylor *et al.*, 2008; Rose *et al.*, 2010a; Graham *et al.*, 2012; Skolarus *et al.*, 2012; Aharonovich *et al.*, 2012).

Discussion

The review of studies reporting on interactive voice response technology found some important considerations for practices and research teams considering IVR as a tool to better understand the patient experience in primary care. Several features of IVR survey capacity are particularly noteworthy as they might address limitations in our current approaches to collecting data on patient-reported outcome measures. The capacity to reach diverse populations through IVR technology addresses a significant limitation of the common practice-based waiting-room administration of surveys which reach only those who attend the practice, potentially creating biased samples (Green et al., 2012). IVR surveys offer the flexibility to programme for a random sample from a defined roster of patients, perhaps the entire list, or a sub-set of highest interest for the study, and use different languages. As the telephone is almost universal, IVR surveys could facilitate access to a more representative sample of the group being studied. This is especially important for those patients who are traditionally more difficult to reach with paper-based waiting room surveys or even online surveys such as the visually impaired, illiterate, lower education, and non-English speaking patients (Stuart et al., 2003; Brodey et al., 2005; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Estabrooks et al., 2009; Oake et al., 2009; Dalal et al., 2010; Lundy and Coons, 2012; Skolarus et al., 2012).

A major barrier to practices participating in research or collecting data on patient reported outcomes of care is the perceived lack of time and concern of added burden on already stretched practices (Fitzpatrick, 2009; Johnston *et al.*, 2010). Once installed IVR could have a limited burden, if any at all, on a practice and if integrated with an electronic medical record (EMR) efficiently create outreach to patients without involving practice staff

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(Stuart *et al.*, 2003; Shaw and Verma, 2007; Bender *et al.*, 2010; Rose *et al.*, 2010b; Aharonovich *et al.*, 2012; Willig *et al.*, 2013). It could be programmed to generate and provide data at meaningful intervals to match study or practice needs.

The range in response rates and the relatively high upfront costs of investing in IVR technology require attention to maximize response rates. A significant feature of IVR for primary care is the ability to have the technology multi-task (Isenberg et al., 2001; Janda et al., 2001; Tourangeau et al., 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2006; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Shea et al., 2008; Dillman et al., 2009; Estabrooks et al., 2009; Aharonovich et al., 2012). The capacity to customise IVR and integrate it with EMR (Lee et al., 2003; Shaw and Verma, 2007; Goldman et al., 2008; Naylor et al., 2008; Rose et al., 2010a; Graham et al., 2012; Skolarus et al., 2012; Aharonovich et al., 2012; Willig et al., 2013) opens possibilities for combining patient services such as appointment reminders or information on clinical services with patient survey questions. Services such as appointment reminders are often welcome by patients and might help overcome reluctance to complete general survey questions (Dillman et al., 2009). Additionally, several practices could share one IVR system, which would help diminish the burden of cost on an individual practice (Rose et al., 2010a).

Several studies suggested patients prefer a simpler process of a direct call-out to them rather than a call-in option (Stuart et al., 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2006; Aharonovich et al., 2012). However, using a simple call-out survey will raise challenges in securing patient consent when IVR is used for research purposes and there have been variable approaches by institutional ethics review boards on whether prior consent is required (Nelson et al., 2002). The potential harm to patients from the responses they might give would need to be very low to make a short consent process possible via automated recorded message ethically acceptable. Securing patient informed consent beforehand, such as during a practice visit, or through a mailout to potential participants requesting permission to contact them by phone could significantly decrease participation rates or limit the sample to those who attend a practice (Nelson et al., 2002; Angus et al., 2003; Krousel-Wood et al., 2006). However the use of IVR for practice-based quality improvement patient surveys might not require the

same degree of information as patient informed consent for research purposes.

An automated IVR phone survey is a different mode from the ones used for many previously validated surveys (Weiler et al., 2004; Sikorskii et al., 2009; Dalal et al., 2010). The potential for mode effects such as satisficing and recency require attention such as changing the order of questions asked (Rodriguez et al., 2006; Dillman et al., 2009). Survey instruments used in other modes would have to be validated for IVR (Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007). Designing surveys which take advantage of the strengths of IVR would maximise the value of this approach. Shorter surveys spread over a larger population, customized patient input on language, be best suited for IVR (Weiler et al., 2004; Abu-Hasaballah et al., 2007; Goldman et al., 2008; Naylor et al., 2008; Shea et al., 2008; Dalal et al., 2010; Rose et al., 2010b; Greaney et al., 2012; Willig et al., 2013). Survey questions benefitting from specific follow up timing would also be suited for IVR (Houser et al., 2013; Willig et al., 2013).

The various studies highlight diverse strategies to improve response rates, which could be a potential weakness of IVR used for research or quality improvement purposes. Using the strengths of flexibility to optimise timing for patients and the capacity to integrate the IVR survey with patient services are attractive ways to enhance the functionality of IVR and possibly increase response rates (Reid et al., 2007; Goldman et al., 2008; Naylor et al., 2008; Sikorskii et al., 2009; Bender et al., 2010; Kempe et al., 2012; Greaney et al., 2012; Houser et al., 2013). Further exploration of response rates and reach capacity with IVR surveys linked to patient services would significantly advance the understanding of this technology to improve primary health care data collection capacity.

Conclusion

As primary care reform continues, the need for understanding the patient experience and improving data collection capacity on patient-reported outcome measures, especially from traditionally difficult to reach populations, is essential. This review of interactive voice response technology, for potential use in automated performance measurement of the patient experience in primary care practices, suggests it may be a feasible alternative to traditional patient data collection methods, which should be further explored. The lessons from the use of IVR in many other health care sectors can guide implementation efforts within the primary care sector to maximise the potential of this approach.

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Authors' Contributions

This scoping review was conducted by Michael Falconi under the guidance of Dr. William Hogg and Dr. Sharon Johnston. Michael Falconi wrote the first draft and Dr. William Hogg and Dr. Sharon Johnston contributed to the writing and critically reviewed the manuscript. All authors approve the final manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

None.

Ethical Standards

No ethical clearance was required for this scoping review.

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Appendix A: Scoping searches

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28 Qua 29 Qua 30 Bene 31 Faci 32 Posi 33 Adva 34 Meri 35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impr 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Sup 42 Enco 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ess measure*.mp.	1379
29 Qua 30 Bene 31 Facil 32 Posi 33 Adva 34 Meri 35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impl 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ome measure*.mp.	151 006
30 Bene 31 Facil 32 Posi 33 Adv. 34 Meri 35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Imp 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ty assurance*.mp.	59 817
31 Facil 32 Posi 33 Adva 34 Meri 35 Profi 36 Pracc 37 Feas 38 Impl 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ty control*.mp.	61 937
32 Posi 33 Adva 34 Meri 35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Supi 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr		469 116
33 Adva 34 Meri 35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pron 41 Supp 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	•	330 899 12 53 827
34 Meri 35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pron 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ve*.mp.	283 282
35 Prof 36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pron 41 Supi 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ntage*.mp.	28 919
36 Prac 37 Feas 38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Supi 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr		17 470
37 Feas 38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ical*.mp.	17 470
38 Impi 39 Pros 40 Pror 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	bility.mp.	117 073
39 Pros 40 Pron 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	pove*.mp.	1 357 286
40 Pron 41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	pect*.mp.	604 867
41 Sup 42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ot*.mp.	700 054
42 Encc 43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	ort*.mp.	8 038 586
43 Cost 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr	uragment.mp.	5
 44 Chal 45 Risk 46 Barr 		447 604
45 Risk 46 Barr	eng*.mp.	428 788
46 Barr		1 659 220
	er*.mp.	179 656
	Ivantage*.mp.	50 287
	tiv*.mp.	848 842
	*.mp.	103 156
	acles.mp.	17 626
	•	5947
	le*.mp.	259 125
	le*.mp. ruct*.mp.	24 589
	ruct*.mp.	161 038
	ruct*.mp. ? or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9	4076
	ruct*.mp. ? or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 11 or 12 or 13	276 011
57 30 o	ruct*.mp. ? or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9	

Appendix A: Continued

#	Searches	Results
58	43 or 44 or 45 or 46 or 47 or 48 or 49 or 50 or 51 or 52	3 575 853
59	53 and 54 and 55 and 56 and 57 and 58	0
60	53 and 54 and 55 and 56	0
61	53 and 55 and 56	13
62	53 and 55	32
63	53 and 54 and 56	24
64	53 and 54	233
65	53 and 56	1221
66	53 and 56 and 57	827
67	53 and 56 and 58	388
68	limit 61 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	13
69	limit 62 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	32
70	limit 63 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	16
71	limit 64 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	167
72	limit 65 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	846
73	limit 66 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	647
74	limit 67 to (english language and yr = '2000-Current')	279