Awareness

Patient Experience

Awareness / Inciting Event

Isabel, 23, recently graduated from UCSB and stayed in Santa Barbara to teach through Teach for America. It's her first full-time job—and with it, her first experience managing her own health insurance after years on her parents' plan. She's eager to take charge of her health but isn't sure where to start or what kind of care she needs. After reading positive reviews of Cottage Health's primary care clinic, she schedules her first appointment, hoping to find a provider who focuses on women's health and will take her concerns seriously.

Needs

Isabel needs compassionate guidance on preventive care and support in understanding her insurance coverage.

Pain Point

Transitioning off family insurance and into adult care feels confusing and intimidating.

Cottage Experience

Description

The primary care clinic receives Isabel's online appointment request. The clinic staff verifies her insurance coverage, and her appointment is confirmed.

People Involved

Clinic Coordinators

System Involved

CH Website-Scheduling

Seeking Treatment

Patient Experience

Establishing Care

During her visit, Isabel reviews her medical history with a medical assistant before meeting her provider. The provider greets her warmly, discusses her work and goals, and reviews preventive screenings and vaccinations. They plan for her to complete her HPV vaccine series and follow up with a gynecologist. When Isabel talks about her anxiety and painful periods, which have often been dismissed as "normal," she feels genuinely heard and supported.

Needs

Isabel needs respectful listening, clear guidance on prevention, and validation of her past experiences.

Cottage Experience

Description

The medical assistant starts the appointment by documenting Isabel's medical history. The provider reviews her health background and notes referrals for counseling and gynecology. He wishes Cottage offered integrated behavioral health, knowing Isabel's anxiety care may not be covered by her insurance.

People Involved

PCP, Medical Assistant

System Involved

Epic-MyChart, Epic-Referrals

Pain Point

Limited mental health resources to offer patients.

Patient Experience

Gynecology Referral

A few weeks later, Isabel visits a gynecologist at Cottage Health for a routine pap smear and to discuss birth control options to control for her painful periods. The provider takes her questions seriously, walking her through each step of the exam and normalizing topics she'd always felt shy about. Isabel completes her HPV vaccine series and leaves feeling empowered and informed, like she finally has ownership over her health.

Needs

Isabel needs clear education on reproductive health and seamless continuity across her care team.

Cottage Experience

Description

The gynecologist reviews Isabel's primary care notes directly in Epic, appreciating the seamless communication within Cottage Health. Still, she notices how much time these first visits take for young patients who are just learning the system.

People Involved

Gynecologist, Nurse

System Involved

Epic-MyChart, Epic-Reminders

Pain Point

Time constraints limit the depth of patient education during first care visits.

Patient Experience

Mental Health and Wellness

Back at work, Isabel's anxiety flares again under classroom stress. Her provider refers her to a few local therapists, but none accept her high-deductible insurance. The provider also recommends meditation apps and online platforms, such as BetterHelp. Isabel signs up but knows it's a temporary fix; she needs real therapy but can't afford it.

Needs

Isabel needs affordable, accessible mental health care and practical tools to manage stress.

Pain Point

High-deductible plans and limited in-network options create barriers to behavioral health access.

Cottage Experience

Description

The primary care provider maintains a personal spreadsheet of trusted counseling resources she can ethically suggest to patients. Staff see this pattern frequently: patients identified as needing therapy but left to find it themselves.

People Involved

PCP

System Involved

Epic-Chat, Spreadsheet

Pain Point

Informal referral systems and insurance coverage limits access to behavioral health.

Outcome

Patient Experience

Resolution

Months later, Isabel feels more confident managing her health. She stays connected with her primary care provider and gynecologist, and gets automatic appointment reminders via text. She's learned how to navigate her insurance, advocate for herself, and prioritize her well-being. However, she still wishes mental health care were easier to access. For now, she uses her mindfulness app between lesson plans and reminds herself she's doing the best she can.

Needs

Isabel needs ongoing support and confidence in navigating adult care.

Cottage Experience

Description

The provider is proud of Isabel's progress and recognizes her as part of a growing group of young patients who are proactive about their health. She notes that while these patients are engaged, many still struggle to navigate the healthcare system. The team aims to develop digital education and care navigation tools to better support them.

People Involved

PCP, Gynecologist

System Involved

Epic-MyChart, Epic-Reminders

Pain Point

The system still relies on patients to self-manage preventive and mental-health care.