Primary care physicians (PCPs) deal with information chaos constantly. Information is missing, incomplete, scattered in many places or its existence not known to the PCP. This randomized control trial tests an intervention to improve information availability at patient visits. The goal is to increase PCP situational awareness and decrease mental workload during elderly patient visits.

In this human factors-designed intervention, a Patient Overview Document or “POD” is completed via telephone call by the nurse before the patient visit and shared with the PCP the day of the visit using a team huddle technique. This tool helps the nurse gather information about the reasons for the visit and helps make sure that needed information will be available for the visit. PCP situational awareness and mental workload are measured pre and post visit and patients are surveyed about their care experience. We also investigate the intervention’s financial feasibility and its impact on the number and type of problems addressed during the patient’s visit.

To date we have recruited 16 physician and nurse/MA pairs at 4 clinics across Wisconsin. Baseline data about the current state of information chaos is being collected for 3 patients per physician per week for
a total of 768 patients. The intervention phase of the study will begin this Fall and last approximately 6 months. 2 control patients and 2 intervention patients will be enrolled per physician per week for a total of 1536 patients during this phase.

This randomized controlled trial of a patient overview document for the visit, along with a physician-nurse team huddle to discuss the document and patient visit, will determine if such an intervention 1) is feasible both clinically and financially and 2) if it improves PCP mental workload and situation awareness while meeting the patient’s care needs at the visit.