

# CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS DEFINE TODAY'S PATIENT JOURNEY

Consumerism is alive and well in the healthcare space. In fact, patients now expect the real-time, convenient communication solutions they receive as consumers in the commercial space. But a 'one size fits all' communication strategy will never meet a diverse patient population's needs.



The average patient journey is made up of **seven distinct phases**, many of which can benefit from a combination of human communication support and technology-enabled solutions.



## 1. PATIENT SEARCHES FOR CARE

When patients are tasked with finding care, they seek the path of least resistance.

**77%** of potential patients are using search engines prior to ever booking an appointment<sup>1</sup>

**25%** of Americans report using web searches as their primary method of finding a doctor<sup>2</sup>

**Ensuring your website is easy to find and navigate is key. Providing convenient physician referrals is necessary, too.**

**92%** of providers think they could improve their provider referral practices to make it easier for patients to get the care they need<sup>3</sup>



## 2. PATIENT BOOKS APPOINTMENT

When it comes to scheduling appointments, patients want options.

**76%** reach for the phone when it comes time to set up a healthcare appointment<sup>4</sup>

**77%** of consumers think that the ability to book, change, or cancel healthcare appointments online is important<sup>5</sup>

**With more young people taking control of their health journeys – as well as their children and parents' – online scheduling will continue to grow more popular.**

By 2019...

**66%** of health systems will offer digital self-scheduling

**64%** of patients will book appointments digitally<sup>6</sup>

Healthcare organizations that fail to provide easy online scheduling options risk losing valuable patients to more convenient competitors.



## 3. PATIENT RECEIVES REMINDER

Patients are human, and humans can be forgetful.

**85%** would welcome digital appointment reminders, medication reminders and general health tips<sup>7</sup>

**59%** believe emails and texts supporting health and wellness are important<sup>8</sup>

**Automated messages sent via patients' preferred communication channel can help lower no-show rates, foster patient loyalty, and support positive outcomes.**



## 4. PATIENT RECEIVES CARE

When a patient is receiving care, they deserve your full attention. Without it, their experience can suffer.

But phones don't stop ringing during appointments, and other patients' interactions with your brand could be ruined if not given the proper support.

**45%** of patients want 24/7 access<sup>9</sup>

**67%** of customers have hung up the phone out of frustration they could not talk to a real person<sup>10</sup>

**And these patients aren't likely to seek support via other communication channels.**

**80%** of callers prefer a phone conversation to an email<sup>11</sup>

Answering their calls in a friendly and professional manner, no matter the hour or what other responsibilities you might have, is a critical factor in retaining their loyalty.



## 5. SUPPORT PATIENT HEALTH WITH TARGETED MESSAGING

Between appointments, patients still crave valuable healthcare interactions.

**32%** of Americans want more health messaging and believe that such messaging may help them avoid a healthcare issue like a missed appointment or a forgotten medication<sup>12</sup>

**These interactions should seamlessly fit into their busy lives.**

**42%** of patients want access on more devices<sup>13</sup>

**47%** of patients said they wanted "personalized" experiences<sup>14</sup>

**Has your patient indicated they love text messaging? Use this channel to communicate with them!**

Healthcare experiences that meet the needs and preferences of individual patients are most likely to support loyalty.

The best way to do this? Enable patients to interact with your organization via both human contact and digital channels.



## 6. REMINDERS FOR PREVENTATIVE CARE

Creating a healthier lifestyle takes work – and reminders to refill prescriptions or seek out care can be helpful for patients.

**59% OF PATIENTS** feel it's important to receive reminders to schedule preventative care appointments via email or text

**BUT ONLY 16%** of doctors proactively issue these communications<sup>15</sup>

**But data shows that communications with patients could be more convenient.**

**38%** of patients want better post-discharge communications between their provider and other members of the care team<sup>16</sup>

Proactively reaching out to patients with preventative health reminders via traditional phone calls, text messages, and emails can help support their health goals and your appointment fill rates.



## 7. BECOMING A LOYAL PATIENT

Patients want access to their healthcare providers, especially those they love.

**The bad news....**

**60%** of providers say that improving patient engagement is a priority

**ONLY 35%** of patients have noticed their providers becoming more engaged with them<sup>17</sup>

**The good news...**

**57%** of their say they're more engaged with their healthcare than two years ago<sup>18</sup>

**63%** are speaking to their providers more frequently<sup>18</sup>

**59%** are accessing healthcare information more frequently<sup>19</sup>



## THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

As communication technology becomes more advanced and available, providing experiences that meet patients' expectations and unique needs is more important than ever. But if healthcare organizations don't **proactively evolve** their strategies to accommodate digital and live communications, personalized interactions, and reliable support, patients' expectations could soon outpace organizations' efforts.

**Want to identify ways to strengthen your patient communication strategy? We're always happy to help.**

StericycleCommunications.com  
866.783.9820



<sup>1</sup>Think with Google's The Digital Journey to Wellness | <sup>2</sup>Catalyst Healthcare Research, 2014 | <sup>3</sup>Fibroblast, 2016 | <sup>4</sup>State of Connected Patient, 2016, <sup>5</sup>Accenture, 2014 | <sup>6</sup>Accenture, 2016 | <sup>7</sup>Annals of Family Medicine, 2016 | <sup>8</sup>Harris Poll, 2016 | <sup>9</sup>Healthcare IT News, 2016, <sup>10</sup>American Express Survey, 2011 | <sup>11</sup>easybee | <sup>12</sup>CDW Healthcare, 2017 | <sup>13</sup>Healthcare IT News, 2016 | <sup>14</sup>Healthcare IT News, 2016, <sup>15</sup>Harris Poll, 2016 | <sup>16</sup>Connected Patient Report, 2016 | <sup>17</sup>CDW Healthcare, 2017 | <sup>18</sup>CDW Healthcare, 2017 | <sup>19</sup>CDW Healthcare, 2017