

Digital Engagement and Patient Support Programs

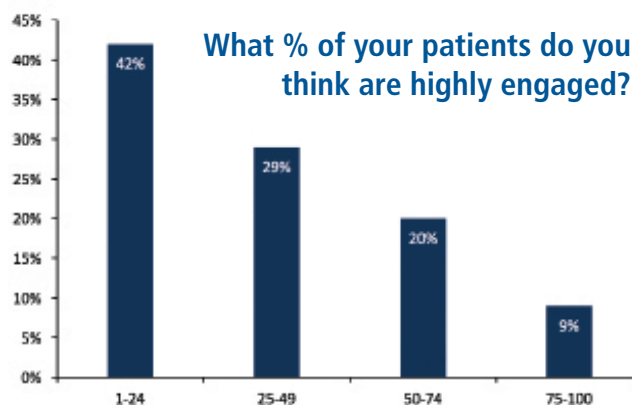
How can technology be truly patient-centric?

Patient-centric care—care that prioritizes respect and dignity, information sharing, shared decision making, activation, and collaboration—is a critical area of focus for both healthcare and the biopharma industry. Patient experience is one of the core elements of patient-centric care, and has a positive association with clinical effectiveness and patient safety across a wide range of disease areas, study designs, settings, population groups, and outcome measures. This close association means that the patient experience needs to be taken seriously as a quality measure in healthcare, both for care providers and for the companies developing drugs and devices.

Patient engagement, which has been defined by the Center for Advancing Health as “actions individuals must take to obtain the greatest benefit from the health care services available to them,” is another key focus of care that is fundamental to driving patient outcomes. Recent research has shown that patients who are more engaged with their health care have better outcomes and care experiences, and that tailoring patient support to an individual patient’s level of engagement increases their levels of activation through building skills and confidence.²

However, despite this data, evidence shows that there is a long way to go to optimize patient engagement in healthcare. In a 2016 New England Journal of Medicine Catalyst Insights Council survey—carried out in 340 US health

care executives, clinician leaders, and clinicians—42% reported that under a quarter of their patients were highly engaged, and over 70% said that under half were highly engaged. Only a tenth of those questioned said that more than 75% of their patients were highly engaged.



Source: New England Journal of Medicine Catalyst Insights Council survey

Improving patient experience and engagement

The goal of effective patient support programs is to build patient engagement, knowledge, and empowerment, leading to better medication adherence and outcomes. In an era where the search for healthcare information is the third most common online activity, and 59% of people turn to the internet for answers to medical questions, before friends, parents, spouses, or doctors, the provision of information and support through digital channels is a core element of many patient programs. As digital health becomes smarter and more advanced, we see a move towards leveraging the capabilities of digital to provide information and support that can be tailored to individuals, accord-

ing to their health status, time since diagnosis, disease progression, educational status, and even the underlying beliefs and behavior.

Human interaction remains vital, however, providing consistency and credibility throughout what can be a complex and challenging patient journey through the healthcare system, to offer care, support, and clarity. In a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine Catalyst, when asked which were the two most effective patient engagement initiatives, 59% of the US executives, clinical leaders, and clinicians said ‘having physicians, nurses, or other clinicians spend more time with patients,’ followed by 54% who said ‘shared decision-making.’

Within the context of support programs, as an ‘in person’ support resource for patients and carers, nurses bring a huge swathe of clinical and social expertise in supporting patients navigate their healthcare journey, and our experience shows that the relationships a patient develops with their care teams is the most valued component of any support strategy. This support is not just practical; it’s the emotional support and engagement with patients and their families that can offer the most impactful sustained benefit and drive activation, confidence, and self-management.

QuintilesIMS Patient Engagement Platform

Acknowledging the ever-increasing industry move towards digitally augmented, multi-channel support models in patient programs, and looking ahead at how QuintilesIMS can enhance its nurse-led, people and relationship focused patient support programs, work began on the QuintilesIMS Patient Engagement Platform in 2016.

One of the founding principles underpinning development of the platform

is that evidence increasingly shows that behavior change is not achieved through transactional one-dimensional technology solutions, such as reminders and alerts, and that sustainable outcomes are delivered through integrated, behaviorally-driven, personalized e-health interventions.³

Further, experience and academic literature supports the position that the most impactful programs are those that understand motivators and drivers of patient behavior, and deploy interventions that integrate high-touch healthcare professional-led support, with multi-channel digital and print support, matched to the individual's needs.^{4,5,6}

The QuintilesIMS Patient Engagement Platform is developed from a behavior-change first, technology second approach, deploying five adaptable engagement modules that support the entire patient journey, all underpinned by validated behavioral methodology.

At its essence, the QuintilesIMS Patient Engagement Platform is an adaptable e-health support platform that enables personalized education, advice, tools and actions to be provided to a patient, in an engaging way, at the point in time which it is most needed. All designed to build on the trusting relationship that is established between patient and program nurses. The platform enables the patient and nurse to dynamically interact, and jointly craft a tailored action plan that meets the needs of the individual patient.

An adaptable measurement framework is woven into the base platform that allows for data to be leveraged to continuously improve and tailor the experience for the patient, whilst delivering a higher-level, long-term view of program impact and outcomes.

Using digital platforms and personal contact to drive patient engagement

There are many different approaches to creating behavior change in patients. Different examples of these are validated in daily use by healthcare profes-

sionals, or through their integration into treatment guidelines, such as the inclusion of diet, exercise, and behavioral modification in the Endocrine Society guidelines on the treatment of obesity in 2015. The power of digital technologies, combined with personal interactions, allows companies to harness these approaches and create tools for patients that are tailored to their needs and support the nurse in uncovering and addressing behavior change opportunities, for example through action plans.

By tailoring the solution to the specific needs of an individual or group, patients can receive the content and tools that will allow them to gain knowledge about their condition and understand how they can work with healthcare professionals to manage their symptoms and treatment. It can be difficult to manage complex treatment regimens and juggle clinic visits, particularly for people who work, who are parents or carers, or who have a condition that makes thinking and planning difficult.

A key consideration for the US market is that a good nurse support and digital tool can help to simplify the patient's journey through the often-disparate support elements provided by drug manufacturers—they may be dealing with copay cards and assistance, a nurse call center, a web resource, all provided separately. The holy grail is to integrate all support into one resource for patients and, importantly, to collect joined up data about the performance of this suite of services.

Supporting nursing staff and physicians

Digital platforms can support and empower nurses by providing training resources, scheduling tools, and background reading, both for nurses and for patients. They can also provide access to outcomes data, such as adherence and persistence; engagement, including satisfaction, completed activities and health activity feedback; and utilization of the platform. Outcomes data can be useful to physicians by helping

them understand real-world outcomes of different prescribing decisions, allowing them to track patient enrolment, evaluate referral rates, and devise better patient management programs.

Digital patient support: looking into the future

Modular, integrated patient support programs that combine high-touch nurse-led support with multi-channel digital solutions are likely to play an increasing role in healthcare, as the industry moves towards more intelligent and personalized strategies that allow for resources to be focused on those most at need, and work with the patient to empower them with the ability to self-manage and achieve more sustainable long-term health goals.

Kirk Harmon is VP Patient Engagement Services at QuintilesIMS.

Rebecca Galbraith is Head of Communications, Market Access at QuintilesIMS.

References

1. Doyle C, Lennox L, Bell D. A systematic review of evidence on the links between patient experience and clinical safety and effectiveness. *BMJ Open* 2013;3:e001570. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2012-001570
2. Hibbard JH, Greene J. What the evidence shows about patient activation: Better health outcomes and care experiences; fewer data on costs. *Health Affairs*. February 2013 vol. 32 no. 2 207-214
3. Car J, Tan WS, Huang Z, Sloat P, Franklin BD. eHealth in the future of medications management: personalisation, monitoring and adherence. *BMC Medicine*. 2017;15:73. doi:10.1186/s12916-017-0838-0.
4. Ganguli A, Clewell J, Shillington AC. The impact of patient support programs on adherence, clinical, humanistic, and economic patient outcomes: a targeted systematic review. *Patient Prefer Adherence*. 2016;10:711-25.
5. Kruse, CS. Patient and provider attitudes toward the use of patient portals for the management of chronic disease: a systematic review. *J Med Internet Res*. 2015 Feb 20;17(2).
6. Kreuter MW, Wray RJ. Tailored and targeted health communication: strategies for enhancing information relevance. *Am J Health Behav*. 2003; 27 Suppl 3:S227-32.