5STEPS

To Improving the Physician-Patient Relationship With Technology

INTRODUCTION

Patients are more informed than ever. As the digital age has changed information transfer significantly in recent years, constant connectivity to the internet via multiple devices gives patients instant access to health information. Patients are now getting answers to their healthcare questions online, on-demand. A recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that eight in 10 web users, or almost 60% of the U.S. adult population, look online for health information, making it the third most popular online pursuit among all those tracked by the project, following emailing and using a search engine.

Since patients are entering their doctor's appointments well informed, they expect more satisfying health experiences. Thus, the shift toward a value-based, patient-centric healthcare landscape has caused healthcare providers to place a stronger emphasis on their patient relationships.

Some common healthcare practice objectives that represent the importance of a productive physician-patient experience include:

- Get to know patients better.

- Communicate more effectively.

- Import clinical data from disparate systems and care teams.

- Enhance patient engagement, both in office and out of office.

- Provide better care with a streamlined process.

Since technology is now such an integral part of our daily lives, it's no surprise that it is being increasing leveraged across healthcare practices. Furthermore, the patient can now drive the care process thanks to technology. The following data points represent technology adoption in relation to enhanced patient experiences:

- In a [WebMD/Medscape Digital Technology Survey](), 84 percent of patients and 69 percent of physicians said they embrace technology to enhance and aid the diagnostic process.

- The 2016 HIMSS Connected Health Survey showed that half (52 percent) of healthcare IT professionals use at least three connected health technologies. Of those who use health technology, 69 percent emphasize tech that allows for the transfer of health data between patient and provider.

- According to [Nuance's patient survey, *Healthcare from the Patient Perspective*](), 59 percent of patients believe the use of technology by physicians leads to better medical care.

For physicians in small practices, enhanced patient relationships are the cornerstone of the practice's success — which ultimately hinges on the technology employed to simplify your workflow. Today, providing efficient, streamlined patient experiences means using technology that can effectively improve your small practice's processes.

Here, we'll walk through five essential steps to improving your patient relationships with technology within your practice.

Optimizing the Physician-Patient Relationship

01 Ensure Interoperability

Since the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act) legislation was created in 2009, the U.S. government has pushed for the adoption of EHR and supporting technology to ensure meaningful use and interoperability.

If you are using an integrated EHR system, this means that, as a doctor, your new patient can come in with their past history, medication list, and labs already available to you. You will be able to spend your time focused on the patient rather that on transcribing their information. The patient will not have to explain the course of their illness each time they meet a new physician, and the new doctor will be able to start treating the patient and asking the right questions as they will already have insight into their medical history.

Patients deserve to know that their physicians have a complete health record that enables evidence-based decisions about their care and treatment plans. In addition, doctors who have access to comprehensive records can make more informed decisions that lead to better outcomes.

An interoperable environment that aggregates information across the full spectrum of providers means information is shared with everyone who needs to know, yet kept secure. An ideal process enables data collection and distribution from disparate systems and patients and converts the data into easy to interpret, actionable information that effectively informs caregivers.

02 Practice Transparency

Transparency through technology can help you build trust with your patients. When EHR systems support collaboration between the physician and the patient, the healthcare process is simply more productive. For example, a transparent system will allow the patient to see exactly what has been diagnosed, such as "coronary artery disease" rather than "heart problem." This specificity can save valuable time on both ends. The patient will not have to spend time contacting the physician for specification on diagnosis, and the doctor will not have to dig through files to understand how to properly treat their patient.

Effective health technology provides opportunities for physicians to improve transparency and accessibility for their patients. Facilitating the flow of information in a secure environment not only builds confidence, but enables patients to become partners in managing their health.

03 Enable Adaptability

In order for your practice to operate optimally, your workflow needs to be as comprehensive as possible, which means the technology you leverage should be extremely flexible so as to easily and accurately adapt to your specialty.

How can you best leverage adaptability to improve patient relationships?

- Make sure your record structure is patient-centric and personalized.

- Adapt the presentation of your information to the user (the patient).

- Provide automated support to verify compliance.

- Integrate patient data streams acquired from remote devices.

- Use technology configurable to your specialty.

Flexible, cloud-based, specialty-specific EHRs will help you ensure you're improving your practice workflow, cashflow, clinical outcomes, and patient satisfaction. Adaptability enables the level of personalization and comprehensiveness that your patients now expect.

04 Give Patients Access

By offering your patients a portal in which they can access their healthcare information, you're enabling them to securely see their results, send a message to the physician, schedule appointments, review lab results and more.

A patient portal gives patients instant access to the data they're looking for. With cloud-based systems, patients can review at their convenience, when they are able to dedicate their attention to reading notes inputted by the doctor. Likewise, patient messages are addressed by the physician when the doctor is able to focus on that task.

05 Preserve Personalization

The efficiency and precision of technology should not be considered a replacement for personalized contact. Remember that human interaction cannot be replaced by technology, but can be supplemented.

By defining appropriate communication channels based on individual patients' lifestyles, physicians can ensure their clients don't feel isolated. For example, while young adults are almost universally comfortable with text messages and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) appointment reminders, older patients may not use smartphones and may have trouble understanding automated alerts. Analytics can help doctors identify which communication channels are best for individuals and population sub-groups, so use technology to your advantage to better understand what your patients prefer.

CONCLUSION

In order to meet current patient expectations and enhance your level of care and profitability, focus on offering:

- An interoperable system that gives you and your patients the necessary insight to save time and improve the experience.

- Trust-building processes that provide an accurate and efficient look into medical records.

- Flexibility through technology that integrates with your specialty's specific needs.

- Patient independence to drive and optimize their health experience.

- Preferred and personalized methods of communication.

If you utilize the innovative tools available to you today, you'll reach the level of care universally appreciated by modern healthcare as we know it.

If you'd like to experience a new EHR system centered on the optimal patient experience, start a free trial of Practice EHR by clicking below!

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