3 Technologies That Improve Patient Satisfaction Scores

Patient satisfaction scores are critically important to hospitals and for good reason. Satisfied patients are more likely to return for the next visit and less likely to file complaints or lawsuits. In fact, approximately 7 percent of patients have switched healthcare providers due to poor customer experience.[1] Patient satisfaction scores can also impact reimbursement for care. The Department of Health and Human Services bases 30 percent of Medicare reimbursement on Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and systems scores.

The key to improving or maintaining patient satisfaction is much more complicated; it's understanding and enhancing the patient experience, from the first contact with the patient to the very last.

Because patients are not typically equipped to judge the clinical competency of their providers, patient satisfaction and perception of care are often influenced by intangibles, such as staff friendliness, attentiveness or wait-times. Low satisfaction scores, therefore, might have nothing to do with clinical care at all. The key to improving or maintaining patient satisfaction is much more complicated; it's understanding and enhancing the patient experience, from the first contact with the patient to the very last.

Fortunately, recent advancements have afforded hospitals and healthcare systems of all sizes and budgets the opportunity to deliver better, more efficient processes and personalized interactions to dramatically improve patient satisfaction from registration through in-patient care and ongoing care management. With this in mind, providers, administrators and health information technology professionals should consider implementing the following innovations.

1. Accurate, Efficient Registration Solutions

The need for instant gratification certainly isn't new, but our expectation of what constitutes "instant" has changed over time. Patients want things faster than ever before. They want their visits to be efficient, personalized and transparent, and they expect to be securely and accurately identified. It's critical, therefore, to select technology that improves the registration process.

According to a study conducted in 18 primary and specialty care clinics, reducing wait-times can improve patient satisfaction and lead to a greater willingness to return.[2] The average patient waits nearly 23 minutes before seeing a provider, according to a study published by the American Journal of Managed Care, and patient satisfaction decreases by 2 percent for each additional minute they spend waiting.[3]

Despite the research, many healthcare registration processes have been forced to rely on low-tech processes (think sign-in clipboards), but innovative solutions now exist that deliver consistency, drive operational efficiencies, provide additional visibility and transparency and reduce wait-times by up to 80 percent. Queue, for example, developed by CrossChx, delivers the above and is obtainable for nearly all hospital sizes and budgets.

Placed in registration areas, Queue tablets are the first point of contact for each patient. Using the tablet, patients sign-in by providing basic identification information and the reason for their visit before taking a seat in the waiting area. This information is sent immediately to members of the registration staff who are empowered to call a patient forward to complete the registration process with a single click. Queue also includes a mounted TV in the waiting room that displays each patient's wait-time.

Queue offers patients a secure, intuitive process each time they visit, and enables staff to greet patients by name for a more personable experience and stronger patient satisfaction. The mounted TV delivers transparency and limits patient disruption, producing a quieter waiting area. Over time, using the aggregate data and efficient processes that Queue provides, hospitals have reduced patient wait-times by an average of 25 percent. At the same time, each patient encounter with Queue saves registration staff about 90 seconds on average.

The most crucial role of patient registration is to safely and accurately identify each patient. That task is often complicated by existing inaccuracies and duplications of patient medical records. CrossChx has found that 25 percent of Queue encounters identify potentially dangerous discrepancies between the information entered into Queue and the existing patient records within the hospital's EHR. By flagging those discrepancies, Queue provides the registration

1.3M
Duplicates

7.7M
Identity errors

staff the opportunity to identify errors and correct them to avoid harmful and costly mistakes. Queue has identified more than 1.3 million duplicate patient records to date, and uncovered more than 7.7 million identity errors.

Advanced solutions such as these are no longer expensive privileges afforded only by the largest healthcare institutions; they are available to just about any hospital size and budget. Hospitals that implement them will inevitably benefit from improved patient satisfaction and contribute to a global culture of collaborative, patient-centered care.

Considering key usability best practices, IPC systems in patient rooms can be designed specifically for kids, adults or elderly patients to create uniquely tailored user experiences.

By incorporating interactive solutions into the patient care experience, hospitals provide greater access to information and reinforce care messages.

2. Engaging, Interactive Patient Care

When patients become active participants in their care they are more likely to take greater responsibility for managing their own health. The benefits are often better patient outcomes, lower costs and better clinical care.

A care delivery model known as interactive patient care (IPC) was built based on the idea that creating stronger patient engagement contributes to increased satisfaction and better health outcomes. Some IPC solutions offer the additional benefit of integration with existing infrastructure, such as in-room televisions. For example, some implemented solutions turn patient televisions into interactive whiteboards that serve as personalized communication exchange points between patients, their families and caregivers.

Using one particular system offered by the GetWellNetwork, patients can get answers to some of their most frequent questions, namely "Who is taking care of me?", "What is happening today?" and "When can I go home?" They can also log questions or concerns with their healthcare providers, get information on their prescribed medications and even choose from a variety of entertainment options.

3. Modern, Mobilized Care Management

Healthcare spending for people with five or more chronic conditions is 17 times higher than for people with no such conditions, according to research by Johns Hopkins University.[2] To combat costs and provide better quality care to those patients, health plans and providers have invested significantly over the past decade to develop care management programs that help patients

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17x

higher than for people with no such conditions

[1] "Customer 2020: Are You Future-Ready Or Reliving the Past?" Accenture Global Consumer Pulse Research, 2014.

[2] Camacho, F., Anderson, R., Safrit, A., Jones, A.S., Hoffmann, P. "The relationship between patient's perceived waiting time and office-based practice satisfaction." North Carolina Medical Journal, November/December 2006.

[3] Bleustein, C., Rothschild, D., Valen, A., Valaitis, E., Schweitzer, L., Jones, R. "Wait Times, Patient Satisfaction Scores, and the Perception of Care," American Journal of Managed Care, May 2014.

[4] Anderson, G. "Chronic Conditions: Making the Case for Ongoing Care." Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, February 2010.

[5] Smith, A. "U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015." Pew Research Center, April 2015.

and caregivers manage medical conditions more effectively, reduce costs and ultimately improve patient satisfaction scores.

Despite its potential, care management is not always executed effectively enough to produce the anticipated return. One reason, providers say, is limited reach potential due to the methods of connecting with patients. Care management typically involves a care manager calling a patient on the telephone and running through questions before giving instructions and advice on what to do between that moment and the next call.

Developments in technology have opened up new opportunities for care management, beginning with patient segmentation and predictive modeling that helps providers identify high-risk patients and patients most likely to engage with support. Additionally, the rising adoption rate of mobile technology[3]—nearly two thirds of Americans are now smartphone users— is presenting an opportunity to intimately engage patients at a much more scalable level.

Mobile offers a convenient, unintrusive means of communication between patients and their care management professionals in which patients can engage on their own terms and their own convenience. For example, a mobile application provided by Wellframe includes a patient-facing mobile app as well as a care management dashboard, allowing care managers to send secure messages to individual patients or even segmented groups of patients and collect real-time data as opposed to self-reported accounts after the fact.

Using this data, care managers can review patients' progress and weaknesses on a regular basis so that they can customize interactive daily checklists, gauge the necessary frequency of contact and effectively coach patients to adopt healthier behaviors.

To learn more about how Queue can give you the best patient registration around, visit crosschx.com/queue or give us a call at 800-501-3161.

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CrossChx is a leader in identity resolution, creating a balance of equity in the quality of data, access to information, and healthcare technology.