

A Patient-Centric APPROACH TO MHEALTH

The possibilities for mHealth solutions are vast and expanding, so how can pharmaceutical brands know how to enter the space, or even if they should?

Consider Your Patients First

Patients are actively searching for ways to live healthier lives, prevent illness, manage chronic conditions, and keep their healthcare costs down. Today's patients, particularly those in the 25-35 age range, value digital tools and are increasingly incorporating these resources into their healthcare routines. According to a March 2016 survey by Deloitte University Press,¹ a substantial number of U.S. consumers are utilizing health and fitness related technology. The survey reports that 58% of respondents employed digital tools to refill a prescription and 32% used them to track health and fitness improvement goals.

Physicians are beginning to see the value in mHealth tools as well. A September 2016 survey of US physicians by Kantar Media² showed that the majority of respondents were aware of, and willing to recommend, health and wellness apps and fitness/activity trackers to their patients. However, despite physician receptivity, data privacy, security and infrastructure barriers make it difficult for physicians to integrate mHealth data into their platforms or workflow at scale. Technology advances will ease this burden, but currently the responsibility to drive larger-scale mHealth falls heavily on patients. For brands this means creating mHealth solutions that are valuable enough to inspire patients to adopt, engage, and share with their physicians.

Adding Value for Patients

When devising your mHealth strategy, it is easy to become distracted by the technology and potential features, but it is critical for brands to remain focused on patients' needs and to clarify the problem they are trying to solve.

Understanding patients and their unique needs and challenges is the key to unlocking mHealth value for patients, but you can find a few thought-starters here.

1. Foster self-awareness: mHealth tools can help patients see and understand the relation-

ships between their medication, nutrition, activity levels (among other variables), and the impact these have on their health and quality of life over time. This can be particularly helpful for data-driven conditions like diabetes where treatment requires regular monitoring and medication dosage adjustments. Technology's ability to collect, monitor and analyze a patient's health data can reveal patterns that promote better health behaviors and empower patients in managing their condition.

2. Encourage Shared Decision Making: A 2017 National Academy of Medicine report³ claims that patients are often insufficiently involved in their own care decisions, sometimes resulting in care that neglects to consider their specific life situations. This can be particularly relevant for health conditions where treatment options have substantial trade-offs in factors like route of administration or risk of side effects. mHealth tools can educate patients on treatment and care options and utilize technology to help them compare their options across the parameters that matter most to them, including lifestyle and cultural beliefs. The data from these tools can be shared with the patient's doctor to inform a more personalized treatment discussion and potentially a better outcome.

3. Focus on User Experience: When contemplating an mHealth solution, a brand must consider how patients will interact with it as well as why. For example, if a patient's condition impacts their dexterity, they may be unable to physically input health data into their mobile device. In this case a brand might consider a wearable sensor or integrating a digital assistant like Amazon Echo's Alexa. Digital assistants can use voice interaction to capture and share health information and education in a conversational manner. They can also help patients execute tasks like arranging medication refills or doctor's appointments, adding an additional convenience for patients.

A Foundation for Success

When brands create mHealth tools that add value and inspire patient engagement, they stand to benefit in a number of ways. Successful mHealth solutions have the potential to differentiate from the competi-

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tion, foster brand recognition and loyalty (for both patients and physicians), and demonstrate Pharma's larger role in keeping patients healthier. In addition, the rich insights from the aggregate data generated by mHealth tools can help brands learn more about the patient population, directly translating to building greater value for all of their stakeholders and themselves. **PV**

Notes:

¹ Deloitte 2016 Survey of US Health Care Consumers;

² Kantar Media Sources & Interactions, September 2016;

³ Dzau VJ, McClellan MB, McGinnis JM, et al. Vital Directions for Health and Health Care: priorities from a National Academy of Medicine initiative. JAMA. doi:10.1001/jama.2017.1964

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