

Impact Patient Outcomes Without Talking to the Patient

Patient marketers are used to providing valuable patient services and information directly to patients. But if the goal is to accelerate patient outcomes, the needs of the caregiver should also be addressed.

Patient marketers know that caregivers play an important part in patients' lives, but they often don't see caregivers as having a direct impact on brand objectives.

Caregivers are not a key consideration. They're typically viewed as an afterthought, or a "nice to have." Traditional pharma marketing invests in caregivers in oncology and pediatric conditions. However, even in these areas where caregivers are emphasized, the approach lacks substantive effort. A different approach can yield greater results and improve treatment outcomes.

Caregivers Play an Important Role

The care of patients with a chronic condition is a significant responsibility. The caregiver helps manage treatment and symptoms, as well as day-to-day physical and emotional challenges. Despite filling a necessary role, caregivers are often overlooked by pharma. Here's why pharma should reconsider. Research shows that caregivers:

Inform dialogue with healthcare providers.

Caregivers are on the front line. They're instrumental in helping patients understand and move forward with their treatment plan. They serve as the "voice" of the patients, and a sounding board for the clinician to determine the appropriate next step in the patient's treatment plan.

Address physical and emotional concerns.

Caregivers encourage and motivate patients to stay with the treatment plan while dealing with side effects and managing symptoms. They help with physical and emotional issues including nutrition, stress reduction, physical activity, and other important activities that directly impact the patient experience and long-term success for your brand.

CAREGIVERS ARE VALUABLE PARTNERS, AND LIKE THE PATIENTS THEY LOOK AFTER, THEY HAVE NEEDS THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED.

Improve patient adherence.

Adherence is a critical outcome for pharma, and maintaining adherence remains a significant barrier for brands. Caregivers prepare medications, provide transportation to infusion centers, resolve access and pharmacy issues, and make sure patients take medication as directed.^{1,2}

Support the Caregiver. Achieve Better Outcomes.

Caregivers are valuable and trusted partners, and like the patients they look after, caregivers have needs that must be addressed. Patient marketers should create evidence-based, skill-building programs that go beyond education to help caregivers learn how to care for themselves and their loved ones. Here's how.

Focus on self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy has a direct correlation with the patient's management of symptoms and his or her level of distress. For instance, a caregiver who has low self-efficacy may add to the patient's feeling of helplessness. The opposite is also true. A caregiver who has high self-efficacy may help the patient move forward.³

Consider the patient and caregiver as one unit of care.

Interventions delivered jointly to patients and caregivers have positive effects on both patient and caregiver outcomes.⁴ Patient marketers need to provide caregiver services that:

- ▶ **Treat the whole patient.** Initiatives should focus on how to manage the physical and emotional needs of patients
- ▶ **Build caregiver skills.** Address how to help caregivers cope, communicate, and solve problems that commonly surface with the condition or treatment. If these skills can be improved, it is likely that the caregivers will function more effectively⁵
- ▶ **Strengthen the bond.** Provide resources to manage conflict and build on the patient-caregiver relationship⁶


Give caregivers the attention they deserve. Address caregiver needs and your support

Contributed by



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services can be a true differentiator for your brand. Seize the opportunity to make a difference with patients and improve patient outcomes. 

Editor's Notes:

¹ Bryant J, Mansfield E, Boyes AW, Waller A, Sanson-Fisher R, Regan T. Involvement of informal caregivers in supporting patients with COPD: a review of intervention studies. *Int J Chron Obstruct Pulmon Dis.* 2016;11:1587-1596; ² Trivedi RB, Udriș E. The influence of informal caregivers on adherence. *Ann Behav Med.* 2012;44:66-72; ³ Porter LS, Keefe FJ, Garst J, McBride CM, Baucom D. Self-efficacy for managing pain, symptoms, and function in patients with lung cancer and their informal caregivers: Associations with symptoms and distress. *Pain.* 2008;137:306-315; ⁴ Northouse L, Williams A, Given G, McCorkle R. Psychosocial care for family caregivers of patients with cancer. *J Clin Oncol.* 2012;30(11):1227-1234; ⁵ Farran CJ, McCann JJ, Fogg LG, Etkin CD. Developing a measurement strategy for assessing family caregiver skills: Conceptual issues. *Alzheimers care today.* 2009;10(3):129-139; ⁶ Hendrix CC, Abernathy A, Sloane R, Misuraca J, Moore J. A pilot study on the influence of an individualized and experiential training on cancer caregiver's self-efficacy in home care and symptom management. *Home Healthc Nurse.* 2009;27(5):271-278

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