

# The Changing Face of Patient Engagement

- ▶ Digital technologies are changing the healthcare landscape, creating opportunities for patient-support programs, patient monitoring and self-management.

**T**here is massive demand for patient-engagement solutions, with predictions that the market for such solutions will reach \$30.36 billion by 2026. In addition, the rising incidence of chronic diseases and government efforts to create awareness about engagement solutions have bolstered the market. Digital solutions, in particular, create new opportunities to expand reach.

However, for these digital solutions to make a difference in health outcomes, patients must choose to adopt them and use them within their clinical care, the tool must produce data that clinicians can access and use, and it must be possible to integrate the tool into healthcare systems and pathways.

## The “Woke” Patient

Patients today are increasingly engaged in their healthcare and are more open to adopting digital solutions to help them manage their health and well-being. Mobile technology, wearable devices, smart clothing technology, and sensors are gaining ground and making it easier to gather data and carry out analysis of that data. Pharmaceutical companies increasingly recognize that engaging with patients and leveraging digital solutions in a way that works for those patients is a critical element in their overall strategy.

For example, patients with diabetes or respiratory conditions are using digital solutions to self-manage their condition, with information on when to take medications as well as the right way to take those medications. In 2019, Allina Health launched a patient-centric engagement platform with the aim of improving the Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) program, designed to assist with diabetic self-care clinical services.

Digital solutions are also being deployed to help patients with mental health issues, such as digitally delivered therapy sessions. And increasingly, digital solutions are being leveraged to help patients with specialist or even rare conditions, such as in some areas of cancer and in multiple sclerosis.

Digital solutions make it easier for patients to engage with their physician, which in turn makes it more likely for those patients to stay informed. In fact, some reports show that health providers that use apps and online portals to engage with patients have engagement rates of 60%. However, if those solutions don't integrate with other solutions, it can mean more work for patients, who may have to repeat the same information to different providers. Today's “woke” patients expect more from digital solutions than simply a tool to gather healthcare data. Instead, what they want includes:

- ▶ **Improvements in remote monitoring.** Telehealth has changed the nature of medicine, allowing patients to check in remotely and making it easier for clinicians to monitor patients in remote areas. Patients expect these options to grow and for the data gathered to lead to more accurate diagnosis and improved services.
- ▶ **Simple access.** Patients are also consumers of other goods and services and have become accustomed to sophisticated digital experiences. Healthcare vendors will need to make sure patients enjoy the same intuitive experience.
- ▶ **Integration.** Digital solutions need to be able to communicate with other systems to enable data sharing across the healthcare continuum and to ensure patients get the support they need without having to constantly repeat information.
- ▶ **Digital innovation.** Advanced capabilities such as artificial intelligence and blockchain are making it easier to develop solutions that meet the needs of patients and healthcare providers, while keeping patient data secure. Innovation will be key to ensuring new digital tools meet the needs and expectations of patients while serving providers.

## The Industry Response

Pharmaceutical companies are increasingly embracing patient engagement tools to help improve outcomes.

Roche has integrated digital health into its operations, from detecting the risk of disease, disease progress, and treatment decisions, to more and deeper patient engagement, noting that “digital health software empowers patients to gain control over chronic conditions by enabling both physicians and patients to monitor treatment progress.” One example from Roche is a Parkinson's smartphone app, PD Mobile Application v2, which includes several motor function tests, to be performed every other day, and passive monitoring. Roche is using the smartphone app in its trial of prasinezumab, an antibody against the alpha-synuclein protein for people with early-stage Parkinson's disease, as an exploratory measure of patients' motor abilities. The app was also used in a Phase I study carried out by Prothena, in collaboration with Roche. Typically, disability and impairment from the disease are measured by physicians in clinical trials, but with the app it's possible to measure this continuously.

Pfizer is working with health-tech startup Popit on a digital adherence solution that monitors patients taking their medication with a smart device, which also alerts patients if they forget to take their meds. The company has begun with a focus on RA patients after its research found these patients weren't getting the support they needed.

Novartis has made a strong commitment to digital health and digital solutions, establishing the European Patient Innovation Summit (EPIS) that brings together patient advocates across Europe to discuss ways to advance digital health solutions. In 2019, EPIS issued a new patient community-led report to help all stakeholders better understand gaps and inconsistencies in digital health solutions to improve care for patients. The main recommendations from the report include:

- ▶ Involve patients in all stages of the development of digital solutions.
- ▶ Build an evidence base to demonstrate how new technologies impact on patient health and well-being.
- ▶ Address patient concerns about digital technologies, such as security and data protection.
- ▶ Ensure all chronic patients – regardless of digital literacy, economic level, education, or disability – have access to technologies.
- ▶ HCPs need to be aware of digital technologies and see their value as tools to empower patients and be encouraged to use them as part of their daily practice.
- ▶ Establish multi-stakeholder alliances to avoid duplication of effort and ensure patient-relevant digital technologies are de-

## EXECUTIVE VIEWPOINTS



**Maria Kirsch**  
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**Model Value-Based Care**

Pharma can increase adoption and speed to therapy by integrating data and analytics across the patient and access journey to model value-based care; then deliver solutions integrated in provider workflows that connect patients, providers, payers, and manufacturers. Companies also need to implement behavioral interventions and leverage technology — AI and machine learning — to predict the next best action and provide effective offerings to increase adherence. By maintaining personalized engagement at each stage of treatment to manage patient and provider experiences, companies can deliver the best brand experience.

**Meet Patients and Caregivers Where They Are**

Companies can drive awareness by reframing and simplifying messaging and by reducing or eliminating industry terminology. Let's meet patients and caregivers "where they are" based on their busy lifestyles and preferences and leverage technology to reduce complexity and provide real-time visibility into insurance benefits, patient support programs, timing of delivery/pick-up, and associated costs to patient. We can also design affordability models with the patient in mind by

streamlining co-pay/accumulator claims processing, benefit verification, and prior authorization handling.



**Lauren Lawhon**  
Chief Operating Officer  
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**Make Patients Part of the Solution**

The obvious, but not always implemented, approach is to make sure patients are part of the solution. Pharma companies need to work with patients to actually identify any unmet needs and then figure out a solution. Patients should be involved throughout the process, from early development to understanding post-launch solution experiences. Patient involvement will also help to ensure solutions are easy to implement and use, and are mindful of potential health disparities and access issues.

**Make Access Easy**

Pharma companies need to make it easy for patients to learn about and access their services. Instead of burying information within a website or ad copy, pharma companies should consider promoting the program itself. Patients should be involved in the development of these services and be consulted on how they would want to access them. Pharma should also consider educating non-physician HCPs, such as nurses and social workers, who can help patients find these programs.



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**The Makes and Breaks**

Thankfully, the "breaks" include the exact successful formula for the "makes." Every patient solution is prescriptive — there is no blanket solution for every study, every therapeutic area, every patient population. This is the first "break." There is a misconception that there are one-size-fits-all solutions that can be applied easily without much process. The solution to this break is really around recognizing this nuance. Every protocol needs to be evaluated separately. Every patient population needs to be evaluated individually and the needs of those patients evaluated. The burden of every protocol on a site needs to be explored differently. Another common "break" is not involving patients and sites in your solution identification process. Can we really sit in a conference room and make decisions around what is needed for a specific protocol without involving the very customers that we serve? If we haven't spoken to a patient affected and tried to understand their journey, how do we know what matters to them? If we are not involving the people who see these patients every day and asking them for their input, how much of a shared solution do we have? We have to involve our sites and their staff in the process as well.

veloped in the most efficient and effective way possible.

**Serving the Patient**

Patient needs are not only supported by solutions but also by services, with an Accen-

ture survey of 10,000 patients finding that while many ask for guidance before beginning treatment, most are not aware of services available to them. According to the survey, patients found to be at risk of a disease are highly receptive to information at that stage, yet most pharma companies don't target patients

with information until after treatment. Those patients who are aware of services value these highly, with 79% of those surveyed saying the services were very or extremely helpful. This further underscores the importance of patient engagement and providing patients with knowledge to help them with their journey. **PV**