

eSolutions: Changing the Face of Patient Empowerment

► If there's one collective truism when it comes to digital technologies in healthcare, it is that they have forever changed the expectations of patients and caregivers.

With so many new players entering the realm of eSolutions to drive patient engagement and patient empowerment, life-sciences companies ignore digital innovation at their peril.

What exactly are eSolutions in the context of healthcare delivery? Over the past few years, eSolutions have become more widely deployed in clinical trials, for example, to collect patient reported outcomes. From a care delivery point of view, eSolutions or digital healthcare solutions assist doctors in how they manage care provision, enhance patient-provider communication, and enable patients to gain more control and insights over their health.

With nontraditional players such as Apple stepping up to the healthcare eSolutions market, pharmaceutical companies will need to ensure they are also at the cutting-edge of technology to engage patients, safeguard their brands, and drive new innovations.

The Patient Journey

Digital innovations are disrupting the traditional patient-physician journey. Today, consumers feel more sure about taking greater control over their healthcare decisions with 85% saying they are confident in their ability to be responsible for their own health.

Now before visiting their doctor, patients go online to do research into their symptoms. Often, they will book their appointment with their doctor online. And rather than passively accept what their doctor tells them, they will look up what the doctor is saying. Nor will they blithely accept a prescription without some discussion. Patients today want options, including those related to cost — branded versus generic — and brands with a higher trust level. Patients will search for product reviews on their smartphones. During treatment, patients won't simply rely on their doctor's advice: instead they will use apps to assess their own health and set reminders to take their medications, and they will turn to online communities for support.

Increasingly, patients want to be able to have virtual contact with their doctors rather than always going in for a visit. One survey conducted by The Advisory Board Company, found that 77% of healthcare consumers would consider seeing their doctor virtually.

While it's generally the patient who makes the choice to use wearables, these devices can transform the patient-provider relationship if they are hooked up to the doctor's preferred platform; patient's vital signs can be monitored remotely and any anomalies quickly can be picked up and managed.

A Technology Revolution

Digital disruption in healthcare is perva-

sive, with new developments and innovations constantly changing how providers engage with patients, how consumers of healthcare become more knowledgeable and empowered, and how pharma companies create awareness about products and health issues. Innovations span apps to improve care management and delivery, gamification to support changes in patient behavior, and AR and VR help immerse patients in their care.

According to McKinsey, future success for the pharma industry must extend beyond drugs to incorporate digital solutions to improve outcomes. For example, McKinsey cites a Parkinson's care plan that would span not only medication but also a "chip on a pill" technology to monitor patient adherence and a smartwatch to assess the patient's condition, remind them to take their meds, and send updates to the specialist.

More pharma companies are developing apps to guide and support patients, including AstraZeneca, which developed Day-by-Day as a live digital coaching service.

The area of gamification has attracted developers across technology, healthcare, and the pharmaceutical industry. And there's good reason for this. Game designer Jane McGonigal notes more than 3 billion hours are spent every week by people worldwide playing video games. More than half a billion people worldwide play computer and videogames at least an hour a day.

Capitalizing on the trend, Aetna has developed a game platform called Mindbloom to encourage healthy living. Several pharma companies are also leveraging gamification to drive healthcare enhancements. Pfizer's Hemocraft is a virtual world that aims to help kids understand the importance of adhering to their hemophilia treatments.

Another eSolution that is starting to gain greater traction in the industry is VR and AR, which are seen as a powerful avenue for reaching patients with treatment and prevention information.

As more eSolutions come to market, leveraging different capabilities, companies will be able to reach providers and patients with important treatment and healthcare advice and thereby improve outcomes as well as trust. **PV**

EXECUTIVE VIEWPOINTS



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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A GAME CHANGER FOR PATIENTS

Artificial Intelligence has been making enormous strides in the healthcare space. Developers are working on methods to employ AI to enhance and improve patient diagnosis to the point of where accuracy levels are at or beyond what the human eye can spot. I have seen tests being implemented in using artificial intelligence to catch anomalies in X-ray, MRI, and CT tests that normally may have been missed by radiologists. Artificial intelligence is quickly becoming a potential game changer that can only benefit patients and hopefully improve treatment and quality of life.

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