

Patient as a Consumer in the Value-Based Care Era

HOW TELEHEALTH, PATIENT APPS, AND WORKFLOW WILL DEFINE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

The value-based care model has created a patient-centric approach to healthcare delivery. Healthcare is now being measured more by the value it brings to the end-user as opposed to the volume of services delivered by an organization. Today, now more than ever, patient engagement and experience is a top priority for providers. Patients are now “healthcare consumers,” with an awareness of the cost of care, the responsibility of managing their own health, and higher expectations of quality service from providers.

The pivot to value-based care was the result of both public and private reforms. While they are generally a welcome change from the status quo, some practices may be reluctant to transition from a volume-based model to a value-based approach. Given the forward momentum of these reforms, we believe that 2020 and the upcoming decade will be known for establishing a patient-centric approach to healthcare.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE COMES OF AGE

What forces are going to shape the patient experience this year? In the wake of COVID-19, transformations in patient experience will be most significant in three areas; telehealth, applications, and workflow tools. Telehealth and applications will have the most visible impact on patient experience while the role of workflow tools will be most apparent to practice managers and staff.

TELEHEALTH IS THE NEW NORMAL

Telehealth is now at the front and center of healthcare. Prior to COVID-19, nobody was anticipating the rapid adaptation of telehealth across the healthcare sector. However, it is now clear that telehealth will be a permanent fixture in delivery of care. Telehealth is relatively easy for practices to adopt, with essentially no need to invest in expensive equipment. It's also easy for patients to use with a computer, tablet, or mobile device. This is going to greatly improve the patient experience. Patients will be able to consult with their providers without having to leave the comfort of their homes. This is especially important because safety and social distancing are now a top priority of patients. Telehealth satisfies that priority while simultaneously making appointments and consultations accessible, convenient, and safe.

Providers will benefit from telehealth too. Using telehealth will protect providers from sick patients while allowing them to deliver care. The 1135 waiver from CMS has dramatically expanded what telehealth services can be billed, so practices can maintain their revenue streams. Additionally, telehealth helps distribute practice resources more efficiently. COVID-19 has caused a dramatic increase in the adoption and regular use of telehealth services, with millions of virtual visits occurring throughout the crisis.

Most of the major EHR vendors are already embracing telehealth. For instance, Epic Systems and NextGen are leading the way on telehealth with both companies integrating new solutions into their platforms. In late 2019, NextGen acquired OTTO Health with plans to integrate OTTO's telehealth program into another recent acquisition, the Medfusion Patient Experience Platform. In May 2020, Epic launched its own integrated telehealth application, Twilio. These important integrations will allow practitioners to interact with patients virtually while updating clinical documentation in the EHR workflow. These companies are leading the charge to bring telehealth into the mainstream, as more practices adapt and respond to the new normal of a post-COVID-19 world.

BETTER PATIENT APPLICATIONS

We anticipate that patient applications will improve and administrative processes such as patient check-in, billing, and secure messaging will be conducted in these applications. Patients prefer this with 89% of patient respondents preferring self-service registration according to a Blackbook study. By improving these technologies, patients will have a better healthcare experience - one that is convenient, safe, and transparent.

Speaking of transparency, this will likely improve with the widespread use of patient applications. Patients will get better access to their ePHI including lab results, demographics, immunizations, and medical history. The era of the healthcare consumer is here and patients will want to be informed and in control of their care.

OPTIMIZING CLINICAL WORKFLOW

Finally, many practices will seek to improve their internal workflow. In-person patient volume is much lower than before COVID-19, creating an opportunity for practices to focus on improving their workflow. Automation will allow providers to spend less time on administrative tasks while lowering human error risk in activities such as data entry.

The most notable changes will be apparent to front-office and clinical staff. This is important as practices fight against physician and staff burnout in the wake of increased pressure to understand, document, and analyze the processes that define the patient experience. If your staff is able to work more efficiently, it will directly impact your patients' experience and go a long way towards satisfying value-based care goals.



If you are interested in learning more about improving the patient experience through technology, we urge you to contact **Jamie Steck** of Keena at jamie.steck@keenahealth.com.