



Engaging Patients and Their Family Members

Texting to Support Value-Based Care
and Better Outcomes



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The Impact of the Patient Experience

Imagine arriving at a hospital for a procedure. You check in and sit in a crowded waiting room for about half an hour before being led back to a room. A nurse asks you some routine questions and leaves. When your doctor arrives, she asks how you are doing and administers your treatment.

After the procedure, the doctor runs through some quick instructions, asks if you have any questions, and bids you farewell—the whole encounter only lasted 20 minutes.

Upon leaving the hospital, you try to recount the post-treatment instructions from your doctor but can't recall how long she said to wait before starting your medication or when you should change your bandage. You stop at the pharmacy on your way home and hope there are detailed instructions on the medication packaging.

The next morning, when you take off your bandage, the treatment site looks irritated. You can't remember what the doctor said it should look like. Should you put ointment on it? Does it need air or another bandage?

You clean the wound, add a new bandage, and shrug hoping for the best...

The scenario above is too common in healthcare, and the most concerning part is the ambiguity about what happens next. Did the patient treat the wound correctly? Did the medication include instructions on when to administer the first dose? Or did the patient wind up back in the hospital a week later with an infection?

None of the concerns raised above would exist with proper patient communication, a foundational element of value-based care. Readmissions, referral leakage, no-shows, care plan adherence, and patient satisfaction scores all highlight the importance of patient communication, engagement, and the patient experience.

Average Readmission Cost:

\$14,400

Per Readmission

Depending on the diagnosis, one readmission can cost as much as \$19k.¹

Proactive patient engagement is the key to reducing readmissions by meeting all three dimensions in the “Triple Aim” framework designed to improve health system outcomes.²

1. Improve the patient experience (including quality and satisfaction).
2. Improve the health of populations.
3. Reduce the per capita cost of care.

Unfortunately, manual patient outreach by phone, email, and patient portal is no longer effective to keep patients engaged, with high costs and diminishing returns. Care communication must ensure each patient understands their treatment plan and instructions. To reach a consumer base ranging in age, health literacy, and resource accessibility, communication should be concise and timely.

Widespread smartphone usage and the simplicity of texting have created an ideal opportunity for healthcare organizations to advance value-based care goals. Texting patients with wellness tips, post-discharge care instructions, and follow-up reminders can help patients work toward healthier lifestyles and better health outcomes.³

Let's explore patient communication challenges and use cases in which text messaging positively impacts how patients engage with their healthcare.

Key Patient Engagement Challenges

Portal Usage

24%

of patients did not view their online medical records within the past year.

Only **38%**

of patients who viewed their medical records took the initiative on their own.⁴

EMR/EHR patient portals have low engagement, which can lead to patients not receiving the information they need for effective care.

Robocalling

51 Billion

Early 2021 reports showed America on pace to reach 51 billion robocalls annually.⁵

The average person is bombarded with robocalls, causing many patients to ignore unexpected calls. Patients who do answer tend to hang up when they realize it's an automated recording.

Readmission Rates

19.1% Readmission Reduction

Post-discharge follow-up within 14 days is tied to a 19.1% readmission reduction in high-risk patients.⁶

Timely outpatient follow-up is a key strategy to reduce hospital readmissions, yet only half of patients readmitted within 30 days of hospital discharge received a follow-up prior to readmission.

No-Shows and Cancellations

23%

Approximately 23% of patients do not show up for their appointment unless they are proactively reminded.⁷

Patient no-shows can diminish productivity, lower patient satisfaction, reduce care quality, and increase healthcare costs. To circumvent no-shows and increase daily revenue, some organizations have tried scheduling more patients than appointments available. But overbooking patients can overburden staff, increase patient wait times, lower patient satisfaction, and increase future no-show rates.⁸

Care Plan Adherence

125,000

Approximately 125,000 Americans die each year from medication nonadherence.⁹

The average American struggles with care plan adherence, with roughly half of all American patients not taking their medication as intended. One out of five prescriptions are never actually filled.¹⁰ On average, 33-69% of medication-related hospital admissions are directly related to poor medication adherence.⁹

Well-Child Visits

Young children who miss more than half of their well-child visits have up to **twice the risk of hospitalization**.

For children with chronic conditions like asthma, the risk increases by **more than three times**.¹¹

Well-child visits that follow AAP's Periodicity Schedule enable pediatricians to identify and manage problems early to avoid child hospitalization. Unfortunately, well-child visit attendance rates are often suboptimal and diminishing over time.

Social Determinants of Health

Over **14%**

Over 14% of Americans are food insecure, creating a higher risk for chronic conditions like diabetes.¹²

Addressing social determinants of health (SDOH) is an important step toward improving patient health and reducing health disparities.¹³ For instance, patients with mobility issues or low income are more likely to face challenges related to housing, food, and transportation.

HCAHPS and Patient Satisfaction Surveys

Proactive patient surveying can **increase engagement** and response rates on HCAHPS surveys, which has been shown to **increase scores**.¹⁴

The Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) provides valuable feedback from patients and informs value-based care reimbursements. Unfortunately, many hospitals do not discover patient issues until receiving their HCAHPS results. Hospitals can get ahead by conducting their own surveys to gauge quality and patient satisfaction.

Top of Licensure Practice for Nurses

33%

Some nurses spend 33% of their shift interacting with technology and only 16% of their time on direct patient care.¹⁵

When nurses conduct post-discharge interviews manually, the process is time consuming, costly for hospitals, and typically as ineffective as robocalling. Manual outreach drains nurses' time and ability to practice at the top of their licensure by pulling them away from patient care.

Texting is Transformative for Patient Engagement

For more than two decades, first-hand experience has proven text messaging to be the most powerful communication tool for improving patient engagement. There are several reasons we recommend a text-first strategy for patient engagement.

Simple and Intuitive

- In the US, 97% of adults own a cell phone and 85% own a smartphone.¹⁶
- Text messaging is the most widely used service on mobile devices in the world.¹⁷

Instant Delivery and High Response Rates

- 82% of text messages will be read within five minutes of being sent—with an average response time of just 90 seconds.¹⁸
- 72% of people check their phones at least once an hour.¹⁹

Ubiquitous Across Sociodemographic Boundaries

- Cell phone ownership is equal across sociodemographic boundaries, including 97% of low-income adults, 94% of rural adults, and 92% of adults over the age of 65.
- Those figures are set to rise as more technology-savvy baby boomers reach the age of 65.¹⁶

Easily Automated

Time is a critical resource, and nonclinical tasks can devour clinicians' time. Texting makes it easy to automate reminders, pre-appointment directions, and post-visit follow-up to engage patients while reducing manual administrative tasks for clinicians. Predefined rules can initiate outreach when it's most useful, such as a child's birth date triggering a well-child appointment reminder to the parent.



Cost Effective

Email and phone outreach are known to consume clinician time without effectively getting through to patients—revealed by diminishing open and answer rates, low voicemail retrieval rates, and little return engagement. Texting, on the other hand, is a cost-effective solution for segmenting patients by condition or SDOH and reaching entire populations in an instant.

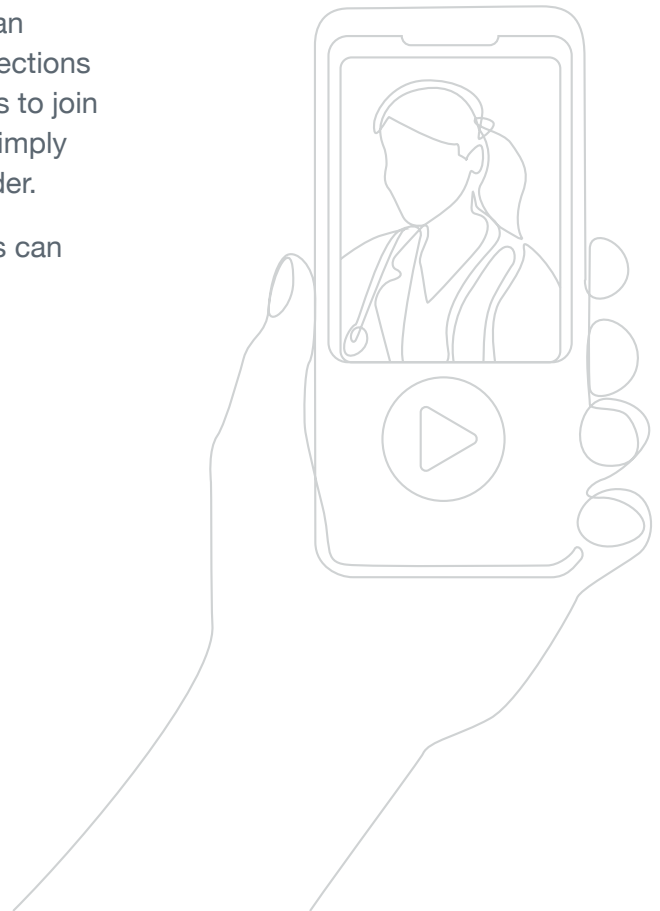
Safe and Convenient

A HIPAA-compliant patient texting solution can create a virtual waiting room for patients, allowing them to wait conveniently in their car until it is their turn to be seen. Whether the goal is to accommodate social distancing practices or simply to reduce crowding and chaos in the patient experience, virtual waiting rooms can remove a lot of friction from patient visits.

Video Visits Support Remote Patient Care

A patient engagement solution that offers video visits can enable providers to initiate scheduled and ad-hoc connections with patients any time. Video visits should allow patients to join without downloading an app or creating a login—they simply click a secure link within a text message from the provider.

A patient communication solution that offers video visits can also be used for efficient virtual rounding.



Advanced Patient Engagement in Action

Wellness and Preventative Care

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends six visits in the first 15 months, which fits into the broad scope of 13 recommended well-child visits by age three.²⁰ Children who miss these visits are at increased risk of being diagnosed with preventable health issues.

Organizations can support AAP recommendations by improving the patient experience with convenient communication and education. Texting parents with invites to book well-child visits and appointment reminders will help prompt them to stay on track.

Well-child visits are just one example preventative care, which is important for all patient populations. Preventative care texting programs can also include wellness tips (such as diet and exercise) and recommended cancer screening prompts once a patient meets specific criteria.

USE CASE

Well-Child Care

In 2016, Park Nicollet launched a text-message-based reminder program to proactively support young parents in scheduling well-child visits from infancy to late childhood. A PerfectServe algorithm leveraged birth dates to send texts to parents of children aged two months to 36 months at appropriate intervals. Each text included a direct link to easily schedule an appointment. The process was seamless and automatic, reclaiming staff time previously used to manage reminders.

Results

- **Three to six months after launch:** The average one-month gap between recommended visit date and actual visit date was cut in half for patients in the birth to 3 years subset.
- **Two years after launch:** The number of yearly well-child visits increased from 87,175 to 98,272—a 13% jump across all facilities in Park Nicollet's health system (HealthPartners).
- **Four years after launch:** There were over 43,000 patients enrolled in the texting program at Park.

Pre-Appointment Reminders Reduce No-Shows

Patient outreach before an appointment can properly prepare patients and reduce no-shows. A pre-appointment text should provide the time, date, and location of the visit, as well as details on diet/drink preparation and wayfinding. An ideal solution also provides patients with a secure chat link in case they have additional questions.

USE CASE

Pre-Surgery Preparation

Arriving for a surgery unprepared can put the patient at risk and waste valuable time and resources. Texting is an easy way to help patients prepare by sending instructions tailored to their specific procedure.

Accommodating Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Advanced patient engagement strategies incorporate SDOH data to best meet patient needs. For example:

- SDOH can be correlated with patients that have a high no-show rate and used to provide them with additional resources to support appointment attendance.
- Food coupons can be provided to a low-income patient if their ability to purchase requisite dietary resources is compromised.

USE CASE

Offering Rideshare Services to Patients

Hennepin Health partnered with Lyft and PerfectServe to provide patients with a history of clinic no-shows access via text message to a corporate Lyft account to get to their appointments.

At the end of the 12-month trial period, the initiative had decreased no-show rates by an aggregate 27%, increased clinic revenue by \$270,000, and delivered an estimated ROI of 297%.²¹

Post-Discharge Follow-Up

Effective post-treatment communication can improve care plan adherence rates by using text messaging to:

- Invite patients to schedule a follow-up appointment.
- Supply a digital copy of care plan instructions.
- Send timely medication and treatment reminders.
- Assess patient health status with text-first surveys.
- Offer a personal consultation if any questions arise.

USE CASE

Orthopedic Surgery Patients

An automated text messaging system helps promote faster patient recovery after total knee or hip replacement surgery by suggesting home-based exercises. A speedy recovery improves patient satisfaction and reduces the need for opioid use (along with risks of addiction).

Patients who receive automated text messages call their doctors less and visit the emergency department fewer times to treat pain related to surgery. Automated messages that provide patient education, support, and encouragement in a convenient way can improve key outcomes without placing extra time demands on the surgeon and staff.²²

Patient Assessments and Satisfaction Surveys

A study of 1,000 cases of patients readmitted within 30 days of discharge found that:

- More than 25% of hospital readmissions might have been preventable.
- Future readmissions might be prevented with improved communication between the healthcare teams and patients.²³

Leading hospitals engage with patients via text to monitor conditions (such as glucose levels), assess pain, and survey patients' experience with the hospital. Text message check-ins can increase patient satisfaction and allow clinicians to address concerns by inviting patients to a secure chat session or phone call.



USE CASE

Tying Reimbursement to Patient Satisfaction

Proactively seeking patient feedback is essential to improving health outcomes and securing reimbursements tied to patient satisfaction. Texting a link to a simple satisfaction survey after a patient encounter initiates timely feedback and allows providers to address questions or concerns early.

Chronic Condition Management

A 2017 study revealed that patients who indicated they were not engaged in their own care on HCAHPS surveys were 34% more likely to be readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge.²⁴ Many chronic conditions can be effectively managed with regular treatments and general lifestyle changes, but it can be difficult for patients to embrace the necessary changes on their own.

Texting patients with information and links to educational content such as pictures, articles, and videos can allow healthcare providers to easily and consistently:

- Remind patients to take their medications.
- Provide timely, targeted educational information (e.g. communication asthmatics during allergy season).
- Obtain relevant health measurements such as blood/glucose levels.
- Prompt patients to follow an exercise rehabilitation program.

USE CASE

Type 2 Diabetes

Successful diabetes care requires a systematic approach to supporting patients' healthy lifestyle choices and self-management to reduce complications. High-quality diabetes education has been shown to improve patient self-management, reduce hospital admissions and readmissions, lower lifetime healthcare costs related to complications, and improve A1C levels by as much as 1%.²⁵

A text-first solution allows providers to deliver:

- Regular educational material regarding nutrition, diet, and exercise.
- An invitation to the patient portal for remote health monitoring of glucose levels.
- Post-discharge care instructions.
- Self-reported health status assessment surveys.

Deployment Considerations

Multi-System Integration

Patient engagement solutions require real-time patient information in order to drive results. As healthcare organizations have grown and consolidated over time, many rely on more than one electronic medical record and/or practice management system. Certain use cases, such as population health, require data to be consolidated from multiple healthcare organization systems prior to transmission to the vendor.

It's important to work with a patient engagement partner that offers specific integrations designed for patient engagement and the bench strength to accommodate unique situations.

ePHI

HIPAA requires healthcare providers and their vendors to establish controls when handling ePHI. Healthcare organizations need certified HIPAA-compliant technical vendors that offer multi-layer security frameworks with physical and technical safeguards enforced by administrative policies. It is also recommended that vendors that have demonstrated tech-compliance by passing audits like SOC 2, so they can best safeguard patient data.

Permissions – Opt-In/Opt-Out

Patient opt-in methodology puts the onus on the patient to initiate engagement. Unfortunately, the patients who need it the most don't always opt in. We recommend adding your entire patient population and using opt-out methodology, so you can reach the maximum number of patients possible while giving them the choice of opting out any time.

Algorithms, Workflows, and Messages

Partner with a solution that offers templated workflows for all types of patient outreach. Ideally, outgoing responses to patients can be customized through conditional workflow logic, allowing you to automatically reply to different types of closed-ended responses with relevant recommendations.

For example:

A patient replies, **“Yes,”** to the question, **“Did you get 30 minutes of exercise today?”** The response back to the patient might be **“Keep up the good work!”** If the patient had replied, **“No,”** the outgoing response might have been, **“Try to get 30 minutes of exercise tomorrow. You can do it!”**

Implementing the right workflows and escalation rules for each patient population helps care teams prioritize and engage with patients who require personalized support.

Admission, Discharge, and Transfer (ADT) Feed Integration

Solutions with EMR integration can instantly notify providers when patients are admitted, transferred, and/or discharged. ADT events can be set to trigger specific workflows that automatically provide clinicians and patients with the information they need.

For example:

Discharging a patient can trigger a post-discharge workflow that texts the patient a satisfaction survey and post-surgery instructions. The same workflow can also notify the patient's PCP of the patient's discharge.

Analytics

Metrics about who is using the system, how they are using it, and how it is impacting key results are vital to gauging overall impact, identifying new opportunities, and proving ROI. Analyzing data about specific populations, such as response rates, number of escalations, and time to call handling can surface useful insights for improvement.

The ideal solution will provide a real-time view of patient flow to help smaller teams and departments monitor and engage with patients as needed.

Implementation and Lift

Select a solution that can:

- Show you value early and consistently.
- Be customized to meet your specific needs.
- Evolve with you and the industry over time.

Avoid long implementation cycles that require significant IT resources, reducing ROI from a cost perspective and dragging out speed to value by delaying patient satisfaction improvements. Modern, cloud-based vendors should be able to get you up and running within 4-6 weeks and provide ROI within a few short months.

Conclusion

A text-first approach to patient engagement adds a lot of value to a hospital's clinical collaboration strategy. Texting is simple, ubiquitous, and immediate—all characteristics of effective communication. Texting has been proven to engage patients with reminders to take the right steps at the right time to supporting positive outcomes in a cost-effective way.

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About PerfectServe

[PerfectServe](#) accelerates speed to care by optimizing provider schedules, streamlining clinical communication, and engaging patients and their families in the care experience. Our cloud-based software simplifies complex clinical workflows and schedules with secure and timely communication by dynamically routing messages to the right person at the right time. We drive more efficient care collaboration in all settings to improve patient outcomes and bring joy back to caregivers. PerfectServe has 25 years of experience and is a trusted partner to more than 500 hospitals and 30,000 medical practices.



To learn more or reserve a demo with an innovative partner rated **Best in KLAS for Clinical Communications** after four consecutive years leading the category, please contact us:

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