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2020

Healthcare Consumer Engagement Forecast

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INTRODUCTION

To say this is an interesting period of time in the world of healthcare consumer engagement would be a significant understatement.

New players from outside of traditional healthcare, continued technology advancements, and ever-changing regulations and value-based performance measures are driving new ways of thinking about how healthcare organizations can connect with the people they serve.

With a projected growth rate of around 30% and a market size valued at nearly $90 million,[1] digital health alone stands to make a sizeable impact on consumer engagement, patient activation and long-term consumer behavior change. Artificial intelligence (AI), high-tech care coordination and telehealth advancements are equally as exciting as we move into the start of another year.

It helps that health insurance markets have stabilized over the past several years, resulting in higher profit margins and a deeper focus on improving member engagement and loyalty. Continued market consolidation is also offering fresh opportunities in engagement, as mergers and acquisitions combine the strengths of health plans, pharmacy management, providers and health technology leaders.

Both payers and providers are now approaching member and patient engagement—across the consumer healthcare journey—not as a check-the-box expense but as an important and rewarding investment in health outcomes, organizational performance, consumer satisfaction and continued profitability.

Of course, healthcare consumers themselves are also playing a leading role. The more involved consumers are in their cost and care decisions, the more they expect from the industry. And their costs are noteworthy. The average American household is spending almost $5,000 per person on healthcare, or 10% of the average household income.[2]

Amplified healthcare consumerism is a trend that began to build steam with the advent of healthcare exchanges and high-deductible health plans. It has gained momentum with growth in areas like Medicare Advantage (MA) plans. All indications are that enrollment in MA plans will continue to rise next year and beyond, especially as the U.S. population ages. Plus, thanks to the loosening of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regulations, non-traditional MA benefits are opening the door to different kinds of related engagement needs.

Millennials, too, are speaking up in an ever stronger voice about what they want and need from healthcare. At about 83 million in population, millennials are now the largest generation in America.[3]

But just because consumers are expecting more doesn't mean they're any less confused about what healthcare costs or who to get information from to figure it all out. Nearly half of American adults say they still need help determining whom to trust when it comes to their health.[4]

When individuals proactively participate in their own healthcare and make informed, evidence-based decisions, whole-system improvement proliferates.

Low heath literacy also continues to be a problem with more than one in four people saying they delay or skip care because of uncertainty or fear of costs, even for preventive care that is typically covered by insurance.[5] And that literacy level doesn't change when other factors like education and income levels are accounted for in the analysis. Even 20% of those making at least $100,000 annually said they had skipped treatment due to uncertainty.[5]

Healthcare consumer engagement—whether in the realm of health plans and their members or providers and their patients—is considered by many to be the final frontier in improving health outcomes and U.S. healthcare costs. When individuals proactively participate in their own healthcare and make informed, evidence-based decisions, whole-system improvement proliferates.

Yet as an industry, we still have a lot of work to do. One recent national survey of clinical leaders and healthcare executives found that more than 70% believe that less than half of their consumers are highly engaged.[6]

At Carenet Health, we have a distinct view of both the steady progress and persistent struggles of healthcare engagement. Our teams support one in five U.S. healthcare consumers on behalf of 250+ of the nation's premier healthcare payers, providers and partners. We help our clients take engagement to new levels through solutions as varied as health coaching via digital apps, a three-tiered patient navigation contact center, innovative HEDIS outreach, consumer advocacy programs and the industry's first nurse-triaged Virtual Clinic.

With more than 50,000 consumer interactions every 24 hours and clients from every segment of healthcare, we have our fingers on the pulse of healthcare engagement and can observe changes developing at the macro level. Almost daily, we see many of the previously mentioned factors converging—and beginning to truly shift the foundation of an industry that has in the past been known for unnecessary friction and complexity.

We launched our Healthcare Consumer Engagement Forecast in 2019 as a result of that view. Our hope is that, by publishing what we believe are the top trends to watch each year, we will encourage the kind of in-depth conversations about healthcare engagement necessary to support an overdue transformation.

In this year's forecast, we're sharing predictions in the 10 critical areas we previously established:

- Rate of transformation
- Technology and digital health
- Telehealth adoption
- Cost of telehealth
- Communications preferences
- Systems integration
- Outreach effectiveness
- Engagement contracting
- Engagement staffing models
- Enterprise-wide engagement

This year, we've also added an 11th forecast area we believe deserves a serious look, as well: Artificial intelligence.

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The bottom line is that when optimized and strategically implemented, consumer interaction—engagement, outreach, service, whatever you wish to name it—can not only help the industry tackle unsustainable healthcare costs, but also build much-needed trust. Forward-thinking and proactive organizations will reap the rewards, and new best practices will be identified.

The industry isn't there yet, but it will be closer than ever before by the end of 2020.

Our 2020 Predictions

01. RATE OF TRANSFORMATION

The sluggish pace of change in healthcare engagement will finally come to an end, and innovation will pick up considerable speed.

We made the prediction in last year's forecast that the rate of change would quicken in 2019 but were disappointed to see the industry as a whole continue to be slow to respond to new consumer expectations and growing engagement needs.

Some of that past apathy can be blamed on continued ambiguity about the future of the Affordable Care Act, plus a fairly constant flow of new and proposed federal and state regulations, followed by a similarly constant flow of industry objections. Payers and providers were justifiably focused on what the immediate future might hold, especially revenue implications.

Now, we're seeing quicker progress just over the horizon.

For example, more healthcare providers and payers are using mobile (via patient smartphones) as another effective channel for communications with patients and members. Engagement-minded leaders are moving past the earlier patient privacy concerns. MPulse Mobile, a Carenet Health partner, reports that its platform alone is seeing more than 200 million conversations annually for its 70 or so healthcare clients.

Remote patient monitoring (RPM) also seems to be speeding away from small pilot projects to a large, permanent and potent engagement solution. A recent report showed the RPM market is expected to increase at a rate of nearly 20% next year.[7]

Drone delivery of prescriptions and convenience medical supplies, mostly unheard of last year, is expected to, literally, take off by the end of 2020.

Non-traditional industry players and large employers are making some big moves, too. Amazon launched Amazon Care, a pilot virtual care clinic for employees in Seattle, with an option for nurses to visit employees in the home. Folded into the clinic will be triage tools to direct patients to the right site of care (through Amazon's purchase of Health Navigator). Walmart opened its first freestanding care facility in Georgia.

Innovations like these will continue, and test projects will be easily validated as successes.

Whether it's Amazon, Walmart, Apple or even Best Buy and Facebook, new kinds of care delivery, access and information dissemination are gaining scale. It's only a matter of time before those changes will force industry-wide movement.

Traditional healthcare insurers and providers (and corporations needing to provide leading-edge benefits in a tight job market) may have been cautious and even complacent about embracing change in the past few years. But they'll have to move forward in 2020 or be left behind.

> Expectations of the 2020 healthcare consumer will be different from previous years' expectations, likely solidifying by mid-year—thanks primarily to news coverage and social media conversations about engagement innovations happening outside of traditional healthcare organizations.

02. TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL HEALTH

Advances in engagement technology will fulfill the escalating needs of participatory medicine and the connected consumer.

It's certainly no secret that there remains a need to fully unlock all of the health and wellness data and insights that exist and are growing exponentially. And no one would argue that those data insights can inform and improve not just the practice of medicine, but the practice of patient engagement. That need won't go away in 2020, but we will see a turn from "how can technology support the industry-centric use of that data?" to "how can technology support the consumer-centric use of that data?" This is a central change—from a push of information and services toward the consumer to a pull ecosystem based on consumer demand.

Why the change? Because the healthcare consumer (as well as even the consumer's home) are becoming more wired and even more reliant on voice technology. That drives the need for data to be used for their immediate benefit—instantaneous delivery of information tailored to their health and wellness. Providing the right information at the right time in the right place will take on even greater meaning, as the information, time and place can be more tailored than ever before.

Patient privacy may continue to keep healthcare IT leaders up at night, but it won't stop consumers from wanting their data and its insights on-demand. Patient portals, electronic health record (EHR) systems and other tech tools that aren't flexible enough to handle incorporating the new types of data and the increasing consumer demands will lose ground to innovators who can.

There will also be new opportunities for engagement technology that creatively harnesses the combined use of personal health data, groundbreaking health biosensors, 5G networks and AI's machine learning.

> We anticipate a growing importance and need for digital triage and the use of asynchronous and voice technologies in virtual care. For instance, how could Alexa be used to enhance Amazon Care?

Essentially, tools that support active participatory health will be the clear winners by this time next year. Think sleep and heart rate tracking devices that impact outcomes and provide everyday guidance, or mobile apps that continuously measure in-utero growth and changes, and then send the information to specialty case managers. Or consider glucose monitoring with immediate care management help via connected health platforms. Expect companies like Microsoft and Philips to further redefine "smart health" and for health-tech wearables to ramp up their use of AI-based engagement algorithms.

Next year will also bring about a great deal more tech-related partnerships around behavioral health, using digital platforms to meet the on-demand needs of more consumers in a time when it's desperately needed.

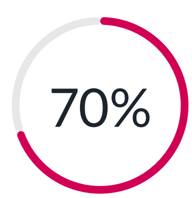
03. TELEHEALTH ADOPTION

2020 will be the year telehealth becomes a normal part of the modern healthcare consumer's life.

Virtual care adoption will expand to include most American healthcare consumers by the end of 2020. It's a bold prediction, and we base it on several factors.

First and perhaps most importantly, state and federal regulation restrictions are loosening for Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, and that's a monumental step.

Plus, studies show nearly 70% of healthcare consumers are willing to use telehealth.[8] One of the reasons adoption hasn't been as rapid as many of us in the industry expected is due to a lack of awareness and education by providers, health plans and employers that the service is available to them with no reduction in the quality of care.[9] We anticipate awareness of the benefits and encouragement of use will grow exponentially in 2020.



of healthcare consumers are willing to use telehealth.

The really good news is that for those consumers who have used telehealth, the rates of satisfaction average more than

850 on a 1,000-point scale. Nearly half of telehealth patients surveyed gave their experience a score above 900. Those are rates similar to those for mobile banking, and those apps are now the third-most-used application among all consumers.[9] Carenet's own telehealth data also shows that as patients use telehealth services, satisfaction rates rise as process familiarity increases.

A variety of stakeholders need telehealth use to skyrocket—and money talks. Large employers are dealing with benefits costs that are increasing by more than 4% next year.[10] A National Business Group on Health survey found that employers are committed to finding ways to lower those costs, and virtual care is high on the list with 64% of the employers surveyed planning to place significant focus on employee use of telehealth.[10]

In addition, health plans are dealing with a cost crisis from unnecessary emergency department (ED) visits—care that could be significantly reduced by member use of telehealth. About 30% of ED visits by patients with common chronic conditions are potentially unnecessary, and that means $8.3 billion in additional costs for the industry.[11]

The reasons for non-urgent ED visits range from lack of knowledge about where to go for care to lack of care access. One study found that 80% of adults who visited the ED did so because they couldn't get care from a primary care physician at the time.[11]

Consumers who are willing to use telehealth aren't in just one age group, either. Studies have found that more than half of U.S. seniors are interested in using telemedicine, especially for chronic disease check-ins and prescription renewal appointments. Middle-age adults appreciate the time-saving benefit of a virtual consult for low-acuity care like sinus infections, and adults under the age of 35 want the cost-savings and are particularly interested in virtual mental health care options.[12]

Finally, there's still a huge opportunity for expansion in the virtual care space. We especially see movement in using telehealth for ER post-discharge, surgery and other treatment follow-up.

As telehealth utilization increases, customization of these services will be key for health plans and providers to set themselves apart from their competitors.

04. COST OF TELEHEALTH

Telehealth services for non-urgent care will be provided by most commercial health plans and large employers with little to no patient copay.

We saw the number of Medicaid, Medicare and commercial plans and large employers piloting low-cost and free virtual care options surge at the end of 2019—from Walmart (under $5 copay) and Amazon (no copay in pilot; online pharmacy is already free to use) to Texas Medicaid, Humana and MVP Health (free, depending on plan). We expect this to expand signifcantly.

More thought is being given to developing integrated virtual "front doors" to improve the consumer experience while keeping costs low. And the industry is finally embracing the modern concept that anywhere from 65% to 75% of all physician, urgent care and ED visits are either unnecessary or can be handled safely over the phone or video.[13] Considering anyone with a smartphone (that's about 80% of Americans) can now access virtual care in some form, it just makes sense for the industry to find ways to shift the cost burden away from patients.

Another reason we see the trend of low- to no-cost telehealth taking off is that the focus on social determinants of health (SDOH) isn't going away. It's widely recognized that up to 80% of a person's health and wellbeing can be tied to SDOH and 20% can be tied to access to quality care alone.[14]

Inexpensive or free telehealth will be vital to providing better, faster access to non-urgent care with lower consumer hesitation. Virtual care, when offered with little to no copay, is a no-risk opportunity for consumers, and it can make care more accessible for those who lack schedule flexibility or childcare, who don't have transportation or who live in rural areas. It also has the potential to engage patients who wouldn't engage otherwise, and when combined with a strong population health management strategy, it can change behaviors through more frequent contact.

There is also the behavioral health component at work here. No-cost behavioral health via virtual care could have meaningful implications for a nation experiencing a mental health crisis. Plus, research continues to find a direct link between behavioral health and physical health, especially for chronic conditions. Consider that 29% of adults with any physical medical condition also have some type of mental health disorder.[15]

With average wait times under 15 minutes to consult with board-certified clinicians and specialists, it's not rocket science to see the impact free or nearly free telehealth could have on the industry and its consumers.

> It's past time for a copay turning point in telehealth. Lower the financial risk for consumers, and utilization will increase while healthcare costs decrease.

05. COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES

The use of the mobile channel in healthcare will significantly expand, but nothing will replace the need for human connection.

Today's healthcare consumers live on their phones. From our experience, they've been open to receiving mobile messages about their health for a while now.

A large-sample study found that 59% of all insured patients and 70% of millennials would choose a healthcare provider based on their offering of mobile communications. That study was published more than two years ago.[16] A more recent study also found that health plan members want more texts from their plans.[17]

Healthcare providers and payers are catching up and feeling more confident in using this channel to reach consumers. The reason is two-fold.

> As healthcare begins to take full advantage of mobile messaging (and other digital developments like voice tools and video monitoring), building trust is going to be critical.

First, from quality score improvement to ED diversion to care management to better portal engagement, tailored mobile messaging can and does work,[18] especially when behavioral science, artificial intelligence and a sophisticated mobile platform are combined.[19]

WebMD has been a leader in this area. Humana has also been using mobile for wellness strategies with highly encouraging results.[18] One MA plan saw a 70% response rate in a text-based medication adherence initiative. CityMD, the leading urgent care provider in the New York metro area, recently saw a 60% response rate with interactive text messages.[20] Mayo Clinic reported a 20% improved no-show rate and a 97% patient satisfaction rate using mobile two-way messaging.[18]

The second reason for the mobile takeoff is higher industry comfort around the TCPA exemption for healthcare calls and texts. Several years ago, the FCC issued a new declaratory ruling, which clarified and expanded exemptions to cover mobile messaging to convey important messages as defined and covered by HIPAA. This included messages relating to appointments and exams, confirmations and reminders, wellness checkups, hospital pre-registration and pre-operative instructions, lab results, post-discharge follow-up, prescription notifications and home care instructions. Early adopters have paved the way for others in the industry to move forward with less concern over legal issues related to mobile messaging.

However, it's also important to note that as healthcare begins to take full advantage of mobile messaging (and other digital developments like voice tools and video monitoring), building trust is going to be critical.

Speaking with a human and having a voice-to-voice connection was found in a recent UnitedHealthcare survey to be especially important when members are trying to get help with a question or resolving an issue with their health plans. In that study, nearly 70% preferred speaking directly with a customer service representative versus using a self-service digital option.[22]

> Increased use of mobile in healthcare engagement makes sense. Research shows that 98% of all texts are read—95% within two or three minutes.[21]

06. SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

The need for real-time data updates will force interoperability across healthcare—and have a considerable effect on engagement.

One of the largest, long-standing hurdles in healthcare engagement and risk-based care models is the lack of unified technology systems and data integration among providers, payers and partners. Solving for that would go a long way toward streamlining and improving communication and empowering consumers (and those who serve them) with real-time data.

The good news is that the sprint toward what Deloitte calls "radical interoperability" will pick up considerably in 2020 and begin to have an influence in a broader section of healthcare.

Most experts believe the capabilities for extensive interoperability already exist. After all, digitization is becoming ubiquitous and rapidly expanding into all aspects of healthcare, including both front- and back-office functions. Cloud adoption has become mainstream, and organizations are beginning to develop strategies for optimizing those investments.

Earlier this year, the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions interviewed healthcare technology leaders to quantify systems integration progress. The center found that nearly 80% have hired data architects to define their interoperability strategies, 73% have a dedicated and centralized team that oversees interoperability, and 60% already host more than half of their applications on the cloud.[23]

Operationalizing interoperability, most notably in EHR systems, also got a big push recently when IBM announced its FHIR (Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources) server is available to the developer community with a permissive open source license.

What does all this really mean for healthcare engagement? It means less friction in the healthcare system and less frustration for patients and health plan members. It means better communication and coordination across the continuum of care. Healthcare entities will have more accurate data that is combined from disparate sources inside and outside of their organizations. Engagement workflows will improve and more agile approaches to outreach will become the norm, as will robust risk-stratification and more targeted and informed care management programs.

Organizations outside of healthcare—Visa, American Express, Netflix, Amazon—have had this part of customer relationship management (CRM) figured out for a long while. It's time healthcare made major steps forward in 2020.

Better systems integration will be a springboard for consumer-centricity and allow in-depth visibility into the healthcare consumer's journey, as it's happening.

07. OUTREACH EFFECTIVENESS

Personalization will be driven by the kings of modern engagement—data and AI.

As healthcare consumers and healthcare's transitioning payment models require better engagement, payers and providers (and healthcare consumer engagement companies) will need to relentlessly ask the question: "How can we deliver more value when we interact with members and patients?"

The answer will almost always connect back to making sure those interactions are highly relevant to the individual. And the way to accomplish that is via solid data pipelines that lead to data-driven personalization.

Consumer mapping that leverages episode-of-care data is guiding more of the industry's communications. That means inbound and outbound engagement, as well as initiatives that require motivational strategies (like closing HEDIS gaps), will become more effective, too.

Fortunately, the industry is getting better at using the data it has and aggregating it with data from other sources to create more holistic patient views. Patient and health plan member mapping that leverages episode-of-care data is guiding more of the industry's communications. That means inbound and outbound engagement, as well as initiatives that require motivational strategies (like closing HEDIS gaps), will become more effective, too.

Data-driven understanding of population segment needs will also become even more important as we see the healthcare consumer's wants and needs bifurcate. Millennials appear to be seeking convenience and automation. The "silver wave" of aging consumers seem to want special attention in their interactions and a different kind of service level. Both groups make up more and more of the overall healthcare spend. Engagement will need to change to keep up, and personalization will be key.

Another important reason personalization is mandatory for today's engagement? Member fatigue. As the number of channels expands and the number of specific outreach programs increases, there's a good chance member fatigue and contact abrasion can become a problem. Relevant communications tied to individual preferences is the solution, along with enterprise-managed engagement. That relevancy will also be important to continuing to identify, address and tackle SDOH.

As much as data-driven, tailored interactions are changing the engagement game, AI stands to make an even greater impact. AI that anticipates and learns individual behavior and needs, and gets more intelligent with every interaction, has always held exciting promise. That promise will soon transition to larger-scale reality.

By taking advantage of AI through machine learning and natural language processing (NLP), healthcare can now deliver customized messages to healthcare consumers at the right time and in the right way. In addition, those messages can extend into interactive dialogues that work harder to influence consumer behavior change. That will have substantial effects on activating healthcare consumers to make the best decisions for their health and wellness.

When used effectively for engagement, AI offers providers and health plans an opportunity to more deeply connect with consumers while potentially easing team workloads. It can also help to ensure patients feel valued in a time when that's critical to satisfaction, loyalty, costs and outcomes.

08. ENGAGEMENT CONTRACTING

The shift toward partner performance alignment and low-risk innovation will accelerate.

For several years now, the engagement partnership landscape has been adjusting to meet the needs of risk-sharing and value-based payment models.

More and more, when a health insurer, health system, pharmacy or pharmacy benefits management (PBM) company has a need, engagement solution contracts are both collaborative and ROI-based. There are higher expectations and greater alignment around roles, program goals, metrics and shared determination of ROI. This transition will quicken next year until better alignment and performance guarantees are standard procedure.

> Healthcare organizations need to work with their engagement partners to test concepts and channels, identify evidence-based insights into human instincts and optimize proven concepts—all without taking on large infrastructure risks.

The greatest area of change will likely arise in the pharmacy world, as PBMs and manufacturers seek ways to respond to heightened government, market and price pressures. Better, more coordinated and ROI-focused consumer engagement strategies will be needed. Improved consumer partnership to address medication adherence and high-risk condition compliance in particular will be key. Part of this acceleration toward performance alignment will manifest in another way, too: Healthcare organizations and their engagement partners need to take engagement innovation to new levels—without necessarily taking on new levels of risk.

That will drive enhanced planning and more testing of new strategies and channels before they're deployed to larger populations. Engagement innovators like CVS Health are already embracing this concept—opting to implement small engagement pilots, experiment with multivariate strategies and test new outreach initiatives in a way that allows quick analysis of performance. And this "fail/succeed fast" model is reliant on strong engagement company partnerships and trust.

09. ENGAGEMENT STAFFING MODELS

Hybrid resource models and the gig economy will emerge as a mainstream option in healthcare.

Staffing shortages, plus the need for improved engagement and a better way to address fluctuating program needs, will push payers, providers and other healthcare organizations to consider hybrid resource models.

The industry will see an increased openness to mixing onshore and offshore teams for healthcare tasks other than IT and back-office functions. What many experts have dubbed "alternative work"—outsourced teams, freelancers, contractors and gig workers—will eventually become essential in this industry.

Other industries are already seeing rapid growth in alternative workforces, and it's predicted that the number of those working in that category will reach more than 40 million next year.[24]

A recent global capital trend study showed that 33% of businesses are using alternative workforces extensively—25% for operations tasks, 15% for marketing and 15% for research and development.[24] Other surveys have found that in healthcare, alternative workforces and especially outsourced teams, are already being used in areas such as full-time consumer support, patient outreach, after-hours services and mobile app development.

The Philippines has been a center for non-clinical outsourcing in healthcare for years, but the industry there is growing in new ways, thanks to the popularity of smart watches and other digital fitness trackers that generate huge troves of data, in addition to the large amounts of data already needing to be captured, stored and analyzed.

The Healthcare Information Management Association of the Philippines has indicated that fitness-tracking popularity has played a part in a nearly 10-fold growth over the past several years.[25] Some of that growth is in providing on-call health experts to analyze the data and reach out to individuals when there are health and wellness concerns. Over-the-phone health engagement accounts for 10% of business process outsourcing in the Philippines.[25]

The U.S. gig economy also includes the use of on-demand clinical and non-clinical engagement specialists as a scalable resource solution. That use is only going to increase, and quickly. Contract marketplaces like Boon are on the rise, bringing the on-demand work of the gig economy to the world of on-demand healthcare services, connecting health professionals to work opportunities.

Virtual care in particular is a natural fit for the gig economy. Remote and independent telehealth nurses, physicians, care coordinators and intake specialists could make a difference in the field as they choose their own schedules and take on hours in ways that improve their work/life balance—a salve for burnout.

The consumer benefit to telehealth as a gig economy service? Patients are able to interact with top talent without geographic barriers. Important to success, of course, is excellence in credentialing services, onboarding and training.

Consider that millennials already make up nearly 50% of the gig economy. In healthcare, 41% of the workforce is millennial—including 51% of nurses and 31% of physisicans.[24,26]

10. ENTERPRISE-WIDE ENGAGEMENT

Enterprise-wide engagement strategy will take priority over siloed initiatives.

For consumer engagement to succeed at the individual level, it must also succeed at the organizational level. The need for careful coordination of all consumer touchpoints, made up of both inbound and outbound interactions, will hit a breaking point this year.

Factors such as increased competition in the MA market, the continuing need to reduce costs and improve quality scores, increased digital and point solutions, ecosystem aggregation, and data-driven personalization will all demand that health plans and health systems finally get a handle on experience management.

Piecemeal efforts will morph into seamless management. Chronic care management will be better synced with specialized outreach programs. Health risk assessments will connect consumers to telehealth and health coaching without delay.

As consumers seek assistance in navigating their healthcare path, they will seek out health plans and providers they trust and that will provide personal assistance. That's where we'll see growth in health advocacy programs—programs that will be a crucial part of the coordinated, comprehensive engagement package.

Enterprise-level alignment of engagement activities will be good for the industry's financial outlook, too. Salesforce's *State of the Connected Customer* report found that organizations focused on delivering connected customer experiences have achieved an up to 15% increase in revenues and a 20% increase in consumer satisfaction.[27] The cycle of revenue improvement continues, too, with better Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems scores and more gaps in care closed.

The operational factor deserves a note, as well. If engagement and consumer activation efforts aren't well coordinated, there is a good chance the organization is wasting money and resources on overlapping processes and interactions. Plus, areas of engagement aren't learning from each other for whole-system optimization.

Healthcare organizations will connect the dots to drive action from every encounter and ignite a new focus on whole-experience satisfaction.

New for 2020

11. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI will demand (and get) a seat at the healthcare engagement table.

Healthcare as a whole has had a love-hate relationship with AI in recent years. There have been some big wins in imaging analysis. IBM, Google, Microsoft, Siemens and many others have made AI a cornerstone of their futures. The projected healthcare AI market is expected to continue to expand to nearly $8 billion by 2022, with a compound annual growth rate of 53%.[28] Amid the growth, though, hopes have been dashed in some areas of clinical decision support, and AI excitement in healthcare has often been tinged with "we'll wait and see."

But today, there is absolutely no doubt that the use of AI in patient engagement will have a lasting, groundbreaking impact. This year will take the industry from acknowledging the potential of AI to leveraging it across engagement needs to advance the healthcare consumer experience.

The end goal of any engagement action should be to help healthcare consumers get the information, answers and motivation they need to stay meaningfully engaged in the management of their own health and wellness. AI—particularly machine learning and NLP—are proving to be highly effective in doing just that.

The effectiveness is tied to AI's ability to engage with a patient based on past, current and future predictive behavior all at once. During each interaction, AI learns from an individual's actions and motivations. AI can then anticipate patient needs and engage with valuable insights that are both conversational and appropriate to the interaction, even quickly changing course as the situation warrants. And all of this can be done in real time.

AI can already be integrated into every engagement channel. It can drive relevancy and urgency through chatbots and two-way texting. It can deliver unprecedented guidance to those who interact with patients and health plan members, human-to-human.

As the amount of data generated in healthcare and through personal digital health devices increases, AI's power will get another strategic boost. In fact, the word "indispensable" has been used to describe how important AI is to harnessing the power of health and wellness data being generated today. That could be why health-related investments in AI topped $1.4 billion in just the first six months of 2019.[29]

Platforms with machine learning and NLP infrastructure will soon become a necessity. AI will become a standard part of engagement design and workflow. Assuring data accuracy for long-term AI-driven engagement performance will be high on the C-suite's priority list.

Ultimately, combining AI technology with the best practices of persuasion and motivation will help crack the code for many of the industry's greatest challenges—including costs, experience, quality and outcomes.

We welcome your questions, feedback and further inputs. Please direct your response to **marketing@carenethealthcare.com**.

You can also interact via our social channels. Let's continue this discussion well into 2020.

Media, podcast and other interview requests should be directed to Skip Dampier via **sdampier@carenethealthcare.com**.

For ongoing information on the state of healthcare consumer engagement throughout the year, visit our online Resource Center at **carenethealthcare.com**.

About Carenet Health

Carenet Health is a leading provider of healthcare engagement, clinical support, telehealth and advocacy solutions. Our engagement specialists, care coordinators and registered nurses support more than 65 million healthcare consumers on behalf of 250+ of the nation's premier health plans, providers, health systems and Fortune 500 organizations. Our mission is to drive market-leading consumer engagement outcomes through our proprietary Intelligent Engagement™ model—an approach made up of 22 finely tuned elements that strategically align for exceptional results. Learn more at carenethealthcare.com.

Note: This publication contains general information based on the knowledge of Carenet Health experts and the experience gained from client interactions and program successes. It should not be considered exact or used as the basis of business or care decisions or actions.

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