

eBook

# Keeping Your Head Above Water

5 Patient Engagement Strategies to Recoup Revenue

**INTRODUCTION**

## Reversing the Trend on Negative Patient Experience

If your system's balance sheet or customer satisfaction scores are taking on water, it's time to reverse the trend. Yesterday's approaches won't hold water today. Delivering a better patient experience and increasing revenue means implementing strategies that are suited to current conditions.

Here are five patient engagement strategies that health systems can deploy now to attract and retain more patients – and help their finances return to normal.

28% of HEALTHCARE systems had a negative operating margin as of September 2020.<sup>1</sup>

# 54%

of patients felt they were rushed when receiving care in 2020, an increase of 35% prior to the global pandemic.<sup>2</sup>



## Strategy 1: Keep Both Oars in the Water with Virtual Visits

Virtual visits can improve the patient experience and the appointment follow-up process. Telehealth allows providers to extend their office hours, helping you schedule and treat more patients in one day. But it's important to consider a balance of virtual and in-person care as two oars propelling your health system's (proverbial) boat forward.

Telehealth yields patient benefits such as reduced travel cost, less time away from work, and reduced childcare demands. And for patients who want to continue social distancing, virtual visits are a great way to keep them engaged in their healthcare.

According to our recent consumer survey, the top three specialties that survey respondents prefer to see via telehealth are primary care, mental health, and dermatology, while patients prefer in-person visits for more specialized medical care such as urology, ENT (ear, nose, and throat), and pulmonology appointments.<sup>4</sup>

Before jumping into the deep end with telehealth, be cautious about a one-size-fits-all approach that could result in a poor patient experience. For example, underserved populations may not have access to technology or housing that provides enough privacy to entertain a telehealth visit. Non-native English speakers may need family members or others present to help facilitate a virtual visit. Make plans to serve these patients in an alternative manner, or look for partners to provide services and locations needed to attend and benefit from a telehealth visit.

Identify the patients and populations that are the right fit for virtual visits based on their condition, and consider offering telehealth as an option for patients who prefer a virtual visit. Once appointments are made, always provide clear information and assistance on how to access virtual care.



**36%** of consumers reported accessing telemedicine or virtual channels three to four times since COVID-19 began, while **31%** said they accessed virtual care once or twice.<sup>3</sup>

## Strategy 2: Keep Patients in the Pipeline with Post-Discharge Follow-Up & Scheduling

Scheduling an appointment for patients' follow-up visits before they leave your facility can help ensure they don't forget to make – or worse yet, miss – their follow-up appointment. Post-discharge follow-up keeps patients in your health system's revenue pipeline and simultaneously reduces the likelihood that they are readmitted to your facility.

Making sure complications haven't surfaced or symptoms haven't reappeared is important for all patients but especially discharged COVID-19 patients with high readmission rates. Personalized follow-up can be successfully implemented using automated messaging via email, text, and pre-recorded messages based on patient profile. Digital and human systems that connect with the patient, or their caregiver, help to establish an understanding of the patient's recovery.

Consider a system that routes and escalates calls based on patient responses to customized prompts, which can drive improved patient outcomes and help prevent readmission.



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A study from England revealed that the readmission rate for COVID-19 patients is **3.5 times greater** than for other hospital patients. Nearly one-third were **readmitted within five months.**<sup>5</sup>

## Strategy 3: Stem the Rising Tide of No-Shows with Text Reminders

Missed appointments are costly – to health systems and to patients. For health systems, no-shows waste the time and expertise of providers and result in lost revenue. For patients, missed appointments can be detrimental to their health.

When patients miss appointments, care is interrupted. Medication isn't monitored regularly. Preventive services and screenings are less likely to be delivered in a timely manner, and emergencies or chronic conditions can arise when care is avoided. Chronic conditions cost patients and systems more in the long run.

Appointment reminders reduce the likelihood that the patient cancels or doesn't show up. And if your health system uses a wait list for cancellations, text messages give you an automated ability to fill the spot if someone replies "No" to their appointment confirmation message.

Text messages can also be used for broadcast messaging to notify patients of important information – like vaccine availability, service changes, office closures, and more. In fact, one of our clients raised awareness of their re-opening post-COVID with broadcast messages, which generated significant page views.

[Download the case study.](#)



One study found that no-shows cost the U.S. healthcare system more than

# \$150B

a year and individual physicians an average of \$200 per unused time slot.<sup>6</sup>

## Strategy 4: Reduce Referral Leakage

One of a health system's largest sources of revenue is through referrals from specialty clinics and physician groups. Ensuring that providers refer patients to specialists within the health system is an important revenue opportunity —as is following-up on those referrals. Lack of referral follow through means patients may not get seen or go to another provider.

Successfully stopping leaks is a matter of consistently closing the referral loop. Automated referral reminders with links to schedule appointments as well as live voice services can coordinate care for patients, retain them within your health system, and drive referral adherence.

Whether the referral is primary care provider to specialist, specialist to specialist, or provider to diagnostic service, transitioning patients to the next step in their care maximizes staff and operational efficiencies, improves health outcomes and patient satisfaction, and helps recoup and grow revenue.



The cost of referral leakage for U.S. health systems is estimated at **\$78-\$97 million of annual revenues** for every 100 affiliated providers, and most health systems lose an average of \$200-\$500 million per year **to competitors.**<sup>7</sup>

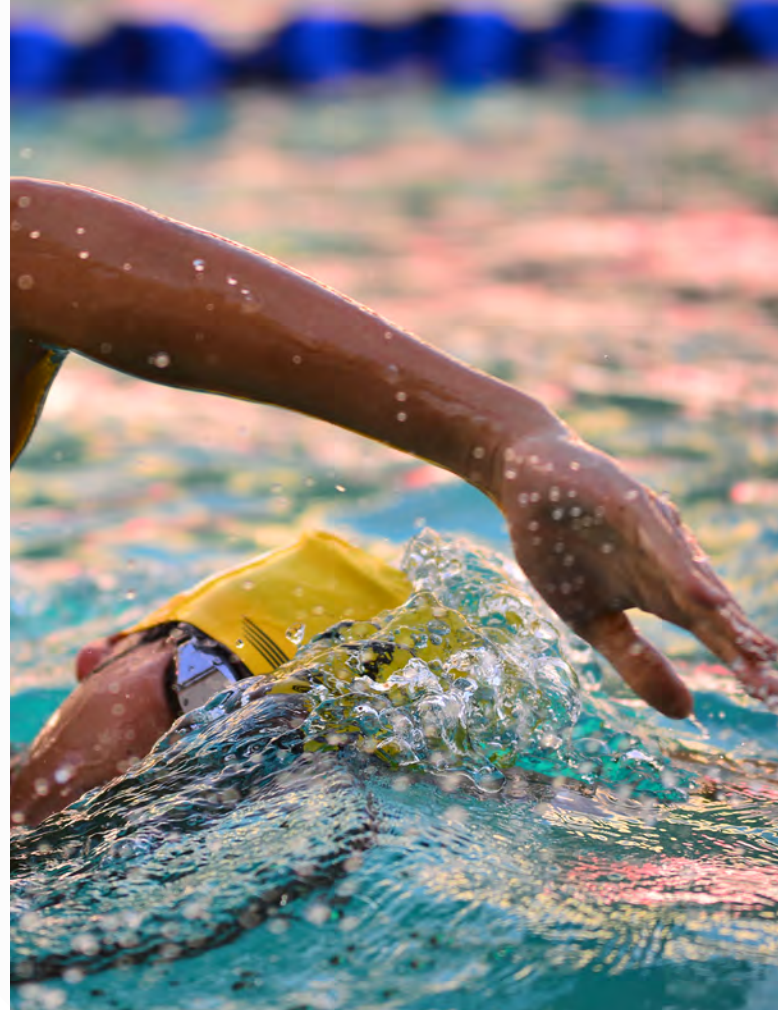
## Strategy 5: Tap into Vaccine Patients for Increased Patient Revenue

Vaccines provide a steady flow of patients to your health system though some might liken it more to a firehose. Many of the patients streaming to and through your doors may be new ones.

As vaccine patients enter your health system, be sure to engage in post-vaccine follow-up, offering followup care and instructions, scheduling for future doses, and vaccination reminders.

At the same time, systemically and consistently check to see if patients have a primary care provider. If they don't, now is the time to follow-up by email and phone and gain their commitment for a broader range of care within your health system.

Being the provider that successfully administers the vaccine has a strong emotional appeal, and patients may be more open to forming a new relationship or becoming more loyal as a result of your ability to reduce the anxiety and chaos they've experienced.



One client found that

# 46%

of patients who scheduled their vaccine appointment online were new to their health system.<sup>8</sup>

## Turn Uncharted Waters into Smooth Seas

Caret Health is here to help. By combining a human touch with our innovative technology solutions, we deliver best-in-class patient engagement solutions that improve patient experience, satisfaction, and health outcomes, while reducing your costs and improving profitability.

### References

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#### 8 GBMC HealthCare Case Study

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## About Carenet Health

As the healthcare industry transitions to value-based care and grapples with crippling costs, it's imperative that health plans implement a proactive, proven strategy for managing HEDIS.

Carenet Health is a high-performing, purpose-driven and results-focused provider of healthcare engagement services and 24/7 access to medical care. Our engagement specialists, care coordinators and registered nurses support more than 50 million healthcare consumers on behalf of 100+ of the nation's top health plans, health systems and Fortune 500 organizations.

Through our proprietary Intelligent Engagement™ methodology, we're bringing together data, technology, human connections, clinical capital, exceptional partners and unique engagement models to lead a healthcare consumer engagement revolution. It's a movement that delivers highly personalized interactions and anticipate-your-needs experiences—like those consumers experience outside of healthcare—that can influence action and touch those in need. It's a transformation we believe has the power to help healthcare quickly become a true and sustainable value-based care system. We call this Engaging. For the Better.™

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### CONTACT US

We're here to help. Please contact us at 800.809.7000 or [marketing@carenethealthcare.com](mailto:marketing@carenethealthcare.com) or visit us at [carenethealth.com](http://carenethealth.com).

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