



# Aligning care decisions across the patient journey



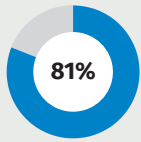
Providing an elevated patient experience is more than just an opportunity in today's environment: It's a mandate for healthcare organizations moving forward. Healthcare leaders are facing staff shortages, burnout, financial pressures, and new competition from retail and consumer brands, all while encountering demand for an improved patient experience.

These challenges are increasingly difficult to navigate. Fortunately, there are tools and strategies that can help clinicians along the way.

## What's driving the need to improve

Patients are increasingly demanding a better experience when they encounter the healthcare system — from beginning to end, not just during the times when they're actively being seen by a provider. Unwanted variability of care occurs when decisions and medical information aren't coordinated and consistent across the care continuum.

Recent consumer research reflects the growing demand for a better patient experience:



Eighty-one percent of patients say a good experience is very important during interactions with healthcare providers.<sup>1</sup>



Seventy percent of patients want health systems to be more actively involved in their health journey.<sup>2</sup>



The average length of stay in hospitals **increased 19%** from 2019 to 2022, even after accounting for patients being sicker and requiring more complex and intensive care.<sup>3</sup>



Every year in the U.S., medication errors injure **more than a million people**.<sup>4</sup>

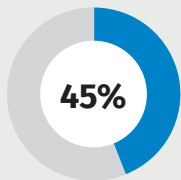


Healthcare organizations are learning how to better understand these demands and address inconsistencies in care.

“Consumers are not satisfied,” said Peter Bonis, M.D., Chief Medical Officer at Wolters Kluwer Health. “Interacting with the healthcare system is very difficult right now, and collectively as individuals, they are saying, ‘We want more options, and we want to this to be done better.’ And the market is beginning to respond.”

Another factor that’s driving the need to provide patients with an elevated experience is a historically challenging financial picture. Becoming more patient-friendly is part of a journey to deliver more cost-effective service lines that can lead to sustainable and profitable growth. That means more of a shift from care and the inpatient setting to care in the ambulatory setting, and that requires new sets of capabilities and new technologies.

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One of the most compelling reasons for providers to improve is new commercial and retail competitors that are offering consumer-friendly care choices. These competitors affect patient choices differently depending on location because many are not offered nationwide, but some also have virtual offerings, so they have a collective influence on where people seek care.

Virtual care and other options are becoming popular. Research shows that 45% of adults have received care at a nontraditional care venue, and most of them used one in the past year.<sup>5</sup> Of those who had pursued nontraditional care, 95% indicated they would visit again in the future.<sup>5</sup> On top of that, patients are “much more tech-savvy and willing to try these things,” Bonis said.

It remains to be seen whether these options are sustainable, though, which could provide an advantage for more traditional providers.

### Where healthcare organizations should focus

Healthcare leaders face competing priorities every day, from improving efficiencies to reducing costs, improving clinician workflows, and addressing burnout. Making decisions in this climate requires understanding the clinical and operational impacts of each investment, as well as their effects on the well-being of both clinicians and patients.

But among so many competing priorities, improving the patient experience generates outsized value, providing accurate, consistent, and evidence-based content across the continuum of care. This helps harmonize care, address workflow inefficiencies, and improve clinical outcomes.

## Healthcare organizations can benefit by focusing on these priorities:



### **Aligning care decisions for better patient outcomes.**

Ensure that your care teams have the most accurate, evidence-based information and tools they need to deliver exceptional care to patients when they need it throughout the patient journey.



### **Mitigating clinician burden and burnout.**

This was a top concern before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is of particular importance now because most other objectives cannot be achieved with a workforce that is overburdened and burned out.



### **Reducing friction for patients and clinicians.**

Being able to access trusted, understandable medical information quickly and easily reduces the complexity of the process and leads to higher patient and clinician satisfaction.

## Meeting patients where they are

Patient engagement and satisfaction continue to remain important and critical aspects of the patient journey. Addressing the needs of patients requires your care teams to adjust some of the ways in which they interact and communicate with them before, during, and after a visit.

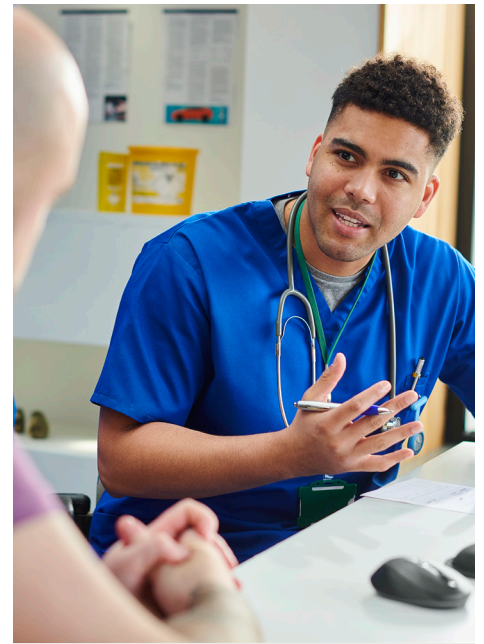
These changes are often enabled by new technology tools such as portals, patient-facing apps and virtual visit platforms. Patients are increasingly comparing their experiences interacting with a care team with digital experiences from other aspects of their lives such as banking, shopping, and ordering food. Thus, meeting patients where they are also means improving the transactional parts of their journey.

## Keys to providing an elevated patient experience

Information is at the heart of every clinical decision, treatment plan, and patient experience. That's why care teams need accurate information and tools to deliver exceptional care throughout the patient journey.

Clinical Decision Support (CDS) tools can provide a foundation for this process. Healthcare systems have been adopting CDS solutions to make more accurate, consistent, better-informed decisions, which lead to improved quality metrics and patient outcomes. These tools can also connect encounters throughout the patient experience. They improve clinical workflows by providing content quickly within the electronic medical record/electronic health record whenever it's needed by clinicians. Other benefits include streamlining care, improving efficiencies for clinicians, enabling care continuity, and improving patient outcomes, efficiencies, and cost savings.

Accurate, reliable drug information and clinical content play a critical role in building trust throughout the patient experience. With the proper tools, care teams can quickly look up medication information to learn about potential side effects and how multiple drugs work together, all without interrupting the patient visit.



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## A strategy for success

Patients deserve to receive accurate, consistent, and understandable information at every point of care. Three of the most effective tools for the clinician to make this happen are CDS solutions, drug referential content, and patient engagement platforms. Doing so can result in lower costs, better patient outcomes, higher patient satisfaction scores, optimization of clinicians' time, and reduced care team burden.

Leaders that take advantage of effective tools and strategies will be in the best position to create a higher-quality patient experience from beginning to end and deliver optimal care.

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