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The Modern Communications Guide for Healthcare:

How to improve the patient experience and employee productivity

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A GUIDE TO MODERN HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS

As healthcare providers seek to deliver exceptional patient care, overall patient satisfaction is determined by more than just treatment – it includes the entire patient experience starting from the very first engagement and extending through all aspects of care delivery and beyond. To meet patients' expectations for a convenient, modern experience, healthcare organizations recognize the need to offer quick answers, helpful service, and efficient task resolution at all points in the patient journey. Furthermore, they need to offer patients the ability to interact through any channel of their choice including phone, chat, email, or SMS.

Healthcare organizations must also consider the dynamics of a changing workforce and the ongoing mandate for privacy, security, and compliance in everything they do. Employees who have the digital tools they need to do their jobs efficiently are not only more productive, but also serve as the cornerstone for delivering the exceptional experiences that patients now expect. For most healthcare organizations, successful operations require a continuous balancing act among patient expectations, employee needs, and compliance standards. With the right digital tools, however, modern healthcare providers no longer need to sacrifice one of these critical objectives in lieu of another. A cloud communications platform that is purpose-built for healthcare can help you achieve this balance and simultaneously:

- Improve the experience for your patients
- Increase your employee productivity
- Maintain communications security and compliance

In this guide, we'll look at each of these priority areas and provide insight into how your organization can streamline operations, improve responsiveness, and provide more choice for patients – all cost effectively.

IMPROVING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

There are many ways to improve the patient experience. Expanded access, increased convenience, and ensured data security are of critical importance to most patients. Our Unified Communications (UC) healthcare solutions provides patients and healthcare staff with integrated text, phone, email, and video conferencing capabilities to help you manage incoming calls, send proactive notifications, and support virtual care.

Incoming Calls

The patient experience often begins with a phone call. When patients reach out for information, seek advice, or need to coordinate care, they want to accomplish their tasks as quickly and easily as possible. That means organizations focus on answering inbound calls promptly, easily verifying patient identity, prioritizing queries, and routing callers to the proper resource.

Here are some hallmarks of great patient communication:

- **Answer all calls in a timely manner.** Better routing and prioritization can help you handle large call volumes and reduce hold times. Use routing rules to set up prioritized call queues that get callers to the right person while interactive voice response (IVR) helps other callers hear prerecorded answers to common questions.

- **Rapidly verify patient identification.** Our integrated solution automatically looks up a patient's caller ID connected to their electronic health record (EHR) and routes the call to the right staff or department for verification. Based on the patient's phone number, it then automatically displays relevant EHR information on a dashboard so staff can quickly verify patient identity. Because your frontline staff can quickly and easily see patient information – including household members, appointment details, medications, and bills – they'll spend less time verifying patient ID and answer patient queries faster. You'll have lower hold times, fewer missed or abandoned calls, and higher patient satisfaction. A win-win.

- **Provide self-service options to answer common questions faster.** Support for intelligent routing and IVR not only minimizes transfers, but also automatically helps patients handle routine tasks such as verifying locations and hours of operation, managing appointments, paying bills, and refilling prescriptions – without the help of staff.

Proactive Engagement

Proactive engagement is another way to improve the patient experience. Setting up systems that automatically reach out to patients with reminders can decrease inbound call volume, reduce no-shows, shorten the revenue cycle, and increase medical adherence. Patients can respond to notifications with a simple confirmation, or they can choose to connect with a member of your healthcare team.

Consider the benefits (for both patient and organization) when automated reminders are used for:

- **Appointment reminders.** Patient no-shows are a long-standing issue posing risks to care delivery and affecting resource use. The most common reason patients miss appointments? They simply forget. Patient no-shows also lead to lost revenue, especially damaging when resources are expensive and in great demand. By many estimates, the average cost of a patient visit is several hundred dollars. Imagine if you could eliminate three patient no-shows per day, and multiply that savings over a week and then annually. The savings add up quickly. Patient notifications integrated with EHR supports automatic (and, if needed, repeated) patient appointment reminders via outbound voice, text, and emails – and add up to fewer missed appointments.

- **Prescription refills.** More than half of all Americans take four daily prescription medications and get their prescriptions from several healthcare providers. Managing care and reminding patients of prescription needs can stress an already overburdened healthcare system. But a real-time event in an EHR – for example, a prescription about to run out – can trigger an automatic notification that prompts patients to refill. This improves patient medical adherence, avoids complications from missed medications, and saves your organization time trying to reach the patient.

- **Outstanding bills.** Average patient collection takes more than a month for 74% of healthcare providers. Manually collecting outstanding bills is time consuming for already overextended healthcare staff. Automated bill-pay reminders free staff up for other activities and help reduce the revenue cycle.
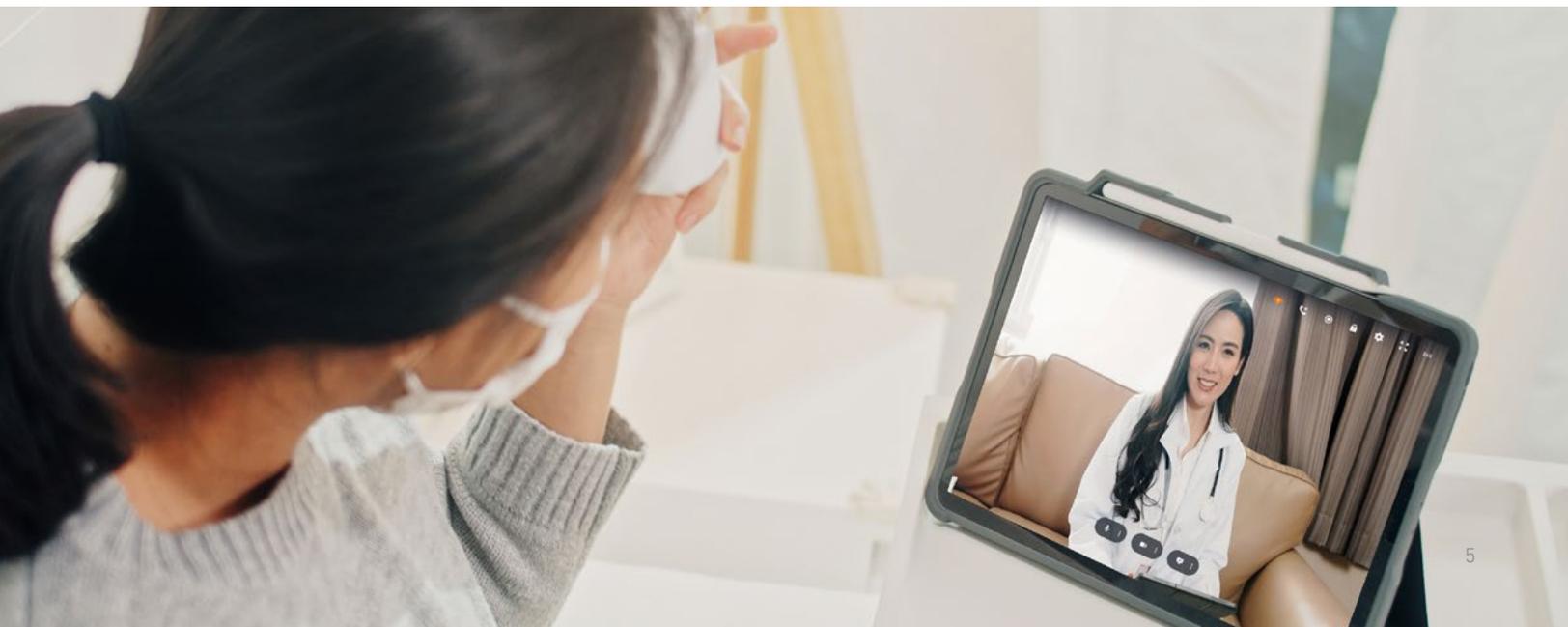
Virtual Care

Telehealth and digital technologies have transformed how patients seek and receive healthcare. A recent study found "telemedicine improved patient access to care by providing greater convenience ... offered more time for patient counseling and more opportunities for better medication reconciliations." In fact, a growing majority of consumers now say they prefer telehealth over in-person visits for a wide range of routine care. And a resounding 94% of telehealth users say they would use the technology to receive medical services in the future.

Engaging with patients via video results in a much greater exchange of information than you can achieve with a simple phone call. And it's far more convenient than an in-person visit. Not all medical conditions are ideal for virtual patient engagements, but with the advancement of high-quality, secure video conferencing technology, this form of interaction can benefit a growing number of scenarios, including:

- Remote monitoring of contagious patients, reducing the risk of exposure for clinicians and other patients.
- Access to specialized care professionals who are not available in all areas.
- Care access for patients with economic, geographic, mobility, or psychological issues that make travel difficult.
- Elimination of time-consuming travel to a care facility, both on the part of the healthcare provider and the patient

Choice of Channel

In tandem with the rapid acceptance of virtual care, 80% of patients now prefer to use digital channels at least some of the time to communicate with their healthcare provider. Healthcare organizations must offer convenience and choice when it comes to patient communication. This means providing multiple channels for either inbound connections or outreach – including voice, text, and emails – per patient preference. If patients can communicate more easily and conveniently, they will be more engaged with their health plans, less likely to miss appointments or medication, and more likely to improve their long-term health and well-being.

INCREASE STAFF PRODUCTIVITY

Not only can a cloud communications system greatly enhance the patient experience, it can also support remote or hybrid work environments, significantly increase staff productivity, and allow staff to focus on activities that help with the delivery of quality patient care. Cloud communications can help organizations quickly scale up or down as call volumes fluctuate, and they can support scenarios where non-essential staff can work remotely without compromising operations.

- **Flexibility to work from wherever.** Cloud communications are available virtually anywhere, anytime, and on any device – creating a more flexible workforce, extending reach, and facilitating staff collaboration. Your receptionist can work from home, answering and routing calls as they do from the office. This can free up physical space in your facility, minimize the risk of exposure, and provide the flexibility that comes with remote work. Remote working is increasingly preferred in by many people, and enabling it will help with recruiting, talent retention, and greater access to remote workers.

- **Staff privacy.** Mobile workers need to securely communicate and share documents and files while also protecting their own personal privacy (for example, not disclosing personal phone numbers). Our mobile apps extend business numbers to mobile devices, keeping your team members' personal phone numbers private when they're routing or returning calls.

- **Automated reminders.** Making manual patient phone calls is time-consuming for your frontline staff. With the proliferation of spam calls, many people don't answer calls from unrecognized numbers, which means multiple call attempts may be required to connect with each patient. Automated reminders for upcoming appointments, prescription refills, and outstanding bills significantly reduce the staff workload and can increase response rates.

- **Improve patient interactions.** Our healthcare solutions are integrated with most major EHR systems, so when your staff takes an inbound call, they get an automatic EHR popup that helps verify identity and provides instant access to patient data. This means your employees spend less time searching for patient information, can resolve queries faster, and have warmer, more personalized conversations in real time.

- **Better communications summaries.** Using communication systems enabled by artificial intelligence (AI), the healthcare management team can monitor staff-patient communications from the moment a patient initiates communication. By using AI to review calls – looking for positive or negative key words – you can flag conversations for follow-up, reward outstanding service, and provide additional training as needed. AI can automatically transcribe calls, redact sensitive information, and even create a summary of the call – making it easier to quickly review previous conversations and get up to speed on a patient's history.

- **Compliant data retention.** Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires a certain level of data retention and security. With our UC healthcare solutions, you can securely archive and retrieve past interactions sand find information when you need it.

- **Choice of channel.** Staff can accept patient inquiries via SMS, chat, and email, in addition to phone calls. They can set up outreach in the patient's preferred channel, increasing the likelihood of making contact.

REMAIN SECURE AND COMPLIANT
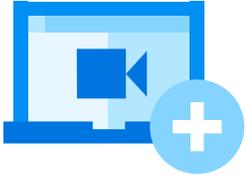
If security and compliance are crucial requirements for the success of any healthcare provider; regulations such as HIPAA have strict rules regarding the management and sharing of medical records and personal health information (PHI). Failure to adhere to HIPAA requirements could lead to financial penalties and fines, bad press for noncompliance, and potentially serious damage to your organization's reputation.

If your patients and providers are using chat, text, voice, video, and email to connect, your ability to preserve, protect, and retrieve communications across these channels is critical. Elevate Archiving's capabilities help ensure compliance with healthcare data retention regulations by maintaining archives for up to 10 years. Your data is encrypted in transit and at rest, and it is automatically preserved in a secure and tamper-proof archive. We make your records accessible and searchable so you can find critical information – including instructions, proposals, recommendations, agreements, and contracts – when you need it. Additional features such as access control and meeting lock provide another layer of security, while audit logs, legal hold, and case management can help mitigate risks during investigations.

Elevate policies, procedures, technologies, and services are audited by a third party to validate conformance with HIPAA and PHI privacy and security requirements, and we will execute a HIPAA Business Associate Agreement with Covered Entities. Elevate's data centers are audited to the SOC 1 Type 2 and SOC 2 Type 2 standard, which validates our commitment to the trust principles of security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality, and privacy.

CLOUD-BASED COMMUNICATION FOR MODERN HEALTHCARE

No matter where you are on the spectrum of cloud communications, we can help. modular platform covers all types of communications, end to end. We have been delivering fully integrated, cloud-based communication and collaboration tools to healthcare providers for years. Our solutions can equip your organization, improve the patient experience, and support remote healthcare while allowing staff to work more efficiently and communicate securely.

Our Unified Communication Healthcare Solutions includes:

UC Platform: A fully integrated unified-communication-as-a-service (UCaaS) solution that combines phones, video conferencing, chat, screen sharing, and file management into one seamless experience.

Contact Center: A versatile contact-center-as-a-service (CCaaS) solution that provides a simple way to manage the patient experience.

OnlineMeeting: A feature-rich video conferencing platform that puts you face to face with your patient, regardless of your locations.

Files: A cloud-based file-sharing system with built-in security features that facilitate compliant and secure collaboration with three functions – file sync and share, real-time backup, and antivirus – on one platform.

Archiving: An archiving solution that automatically preserves, searches, and retrieves your critical business communications, including chats, SMS, phone calls, voicemails, email, and more.

Connect with us today to learn more about our complete cloud communication solutions for healthcare.

Questions? Contact Us Today!

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