

Communication Pathways in the Healthcare Ecosystem: Navigating the Systemic Win3 Triangle

Insights from the KP Morgan Group Conference:
Global Commercial and Sales Force Excellence
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Mini-Whitepaper 2 of 4

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In collaboration with



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This is the second in a series of mini-whitepapers summarizing key takeaways from the healthcare mapping workshop conducted at the **14th Global Commercial and Sales Force Effectiveness (GCSFE) Summit 2024**, organized by the KP Morgan Group.

Building on the foundational concepts explored in the first article, we now turn our focus to the **communication pathways** that connect healthcare stakeholders within the framework of the **Systemic Win3 Triangle**.

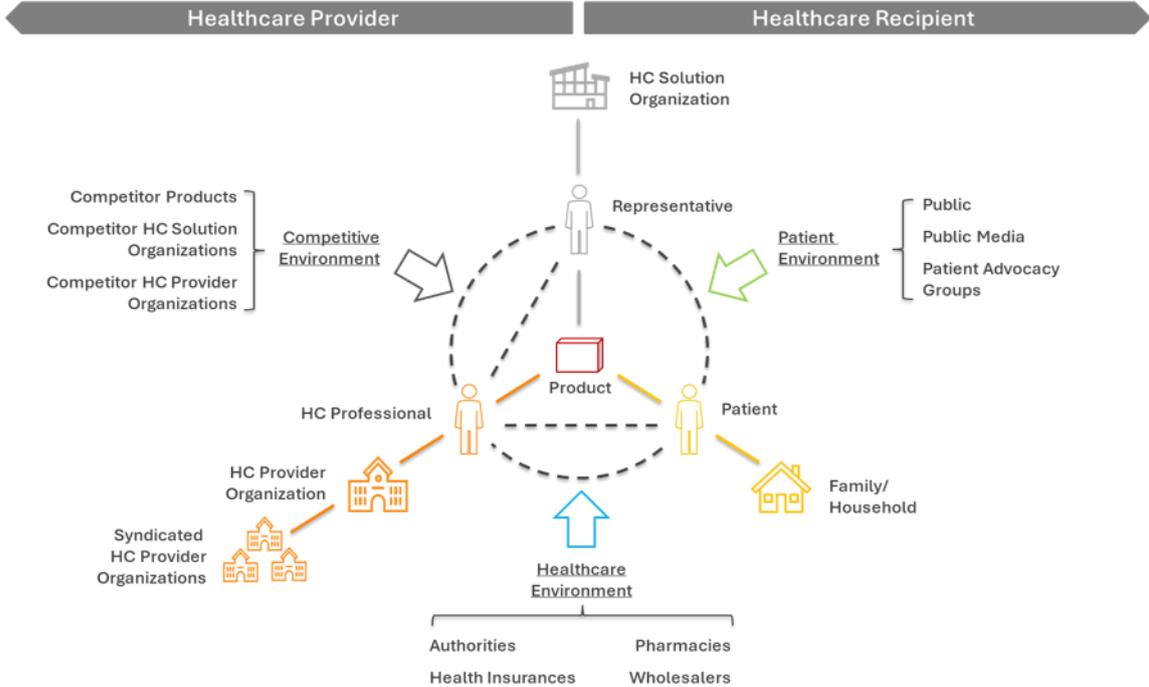


Figure 1: The Systemic Win3 Triangle: Framework for mapping stakeholder interdependencies in the wider healthcare ecosystem.

In the previous article published on LinkedIn (Stefan Turnwald, 2024), we introduced the Systemic Win3 Triangle—a strategic framework for understanding the interconnections between key stakeholders in the healthcare system: patients, healthcare professionals (HCPs), and pharmaceutical representatives. By placing the product at the center of the model and analyzing the surrounding influences—namely, the healthcare, patient, and competitive environments—we gained a nuanced perspective on how stakeholder roles vary across market segments such as Rx pharma, OTC pharma, and MedTech. This model provides a foundation for identifying shared challenges and unlocking opportunities for cross-industry engagement.

In this article, we expand on that foundation by exploring **communication pathways**—the lifeblood of any functioning healthcare system. Effective communication not only bridges the gap between innovation and patient care but also drives product adoption and improves health outcomes. However, communication in the healthcare environment is far from uniform. It is shaped by regulatory boundaries, market context, and the specific roles of each stakeholder. By applying the Systemic Win3 Triangle, we can better identify and optimize these pathways for meaningful and compliant engagement.

The Role of Communication in the Healthcare System

Communication in healthcare serves as a vital bridge—translating complex clinical evidence into actionable decisions for HCPs, and empowering patients with information to take charge of their own care. For pharmaceutical and MedTech companies, the ability to convey relevant, timely, and compliant information is essential for fostering trust, shaping perception, and encouraging the adoption of therapies and technologies.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control defines health communication as "the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health (Pellegrini & Lovati, 2025)." This definition underscores the article's point that communication serves as 'a vital bridge, translating complex clinical data into actionable insights.'"

Yet communication across the healthcare ecosystem is highly asymmetric. While pharmaceutical companies can engage HCPs with product-specific messaging, communication to patients is usually limited to non-promotional, educational content. These differences underscore the need to design communication strategies that not only account for regulatory constraints but also adapt to the different pathways available for reaching stakeholders both directly and indirectly.

Regulatory Constraints on Communication

Due to the highly regulated nature of the pharmaceutical and MedTech industries, all stakeholder communication must adhere to strict compliance standards. These restrictions vary across target groups—HCPs, patients, caregivers, payers, and the broader public—and typically increase as communication moves further from the clinical decision-maker.

Key regulatory considerations include:

- **Alignment with Approved Product Information:** All product-related communications must reflect the official Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC in EMEA, USPI in the US) and approved labeling. Claims must be evidence-based and include a fair balance between benefits and risks.

- **Restrictions on Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Promotion:** In most markets outside of the United States, direct promotion of prescription medications to patients is prohibited. Where permitted, such as in the U.S., DTC advertising must still follow rigorous standards for fair balance and disclosure.
- **Educational Focus for Patients and the Public:** Communication directed toward non-HCP audiences must prioritize disease awareness, early detection, treatment access, and adherence—without explicitly promoting specific prescription products.
- **Regional Regulatory Compliance:** All communication must be aligned with national and regional regulatory bodies and laws, e.g., FDA in the US, local regulatory bodies in the EU (e.g., BfArM and the German Drug Advertising Act (HWG) in Germany), and the MHRA, PAGB, and ABPI in the UK. Differences in local legislation and enforcement levels require customized execution strategies.

These constraints create a delicate balancing act: while healthcare companies must inform, educate, and engage, they must do so within boundaries that preserve ethical integrity and regulatory compliance. Rebecca Galbraith and Markus Gores (2021) confirm that regulatory considerations significantly influence how evidence is communicated, noting the importance of understanding "different stakeholders' requirements and areas of interest and inquiry in RWE initiatives".

Modes of Communication Pathways in the Healthcare System

Given these regulatory limitations, healthcare communication often relies on direct and/or indirect pathways to reach its intended audience. The structure and effectiveness of these modes vary based on the stakeholder group being addressed:

- **HCPs** can be reached directly through detailing, continuing medical education (CME), peer-to-peer engagement, and scientific publications. These channels allow for deep clinical discussion but also demand high levels of accuracy and compliance.
- **Patients** typically receive information through a mix of HCP consultations, public campaigns, patient advocacy groups (PAGs), media, and digital content. While some channels are initiated by life sciences companies, others are organically driven by community or caregiver networks.
- **Caregivers and the public** form an additional layer of influence, often acting as intermediaries in the patient decision-making process.

This dependence on indirect channels introduces complexity. Patients may hear one message from their HCP and a different interpretation via media or online communities. Such inconsistencies may erode trust, delay treatment, and undermine the therapeutic relationship. The challenge, then, is to design communication strategies that are aligned across all channels—delivering accurate, understandable, and relevant content to each audience, within regulatory guardrails.

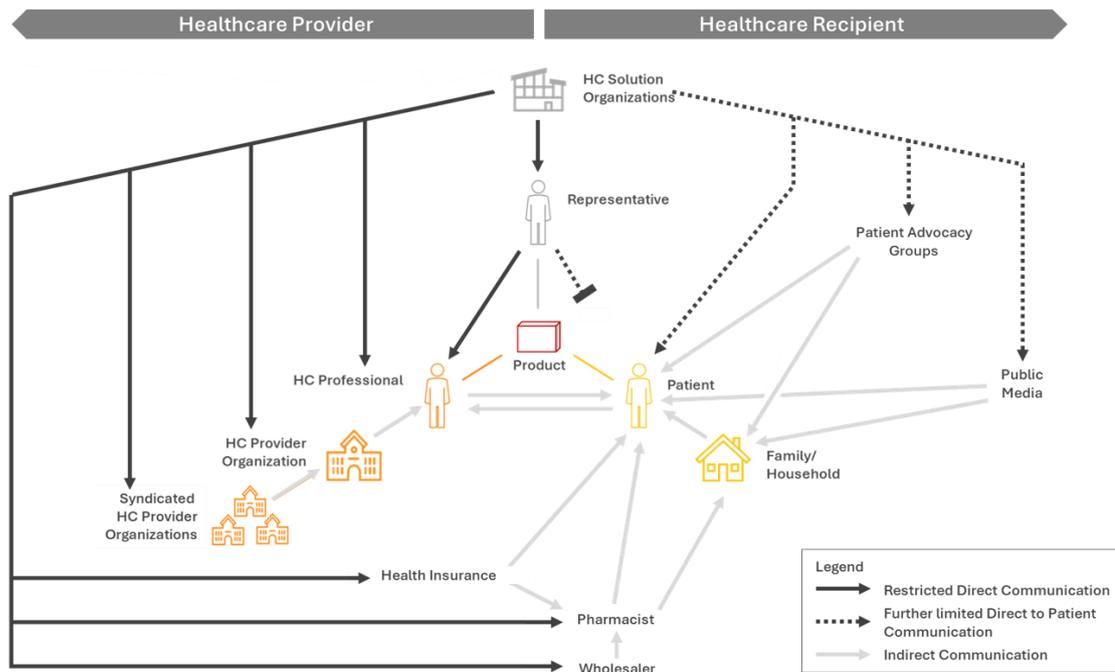


Figure 2: Communication Pathways in the Healthcare System: Direct and indirect modes.

Implications for Effective Communication Strategies

To succeed in this environment, communication strategies must be:

- **Consistent Across Channels:** Messaging delivered to HCPs, patients, and the public should be harmonized to avoid contradictions or misinterpretations. This not only reinforces product understanding but also builds trust in the brand and its representatives.
- **Stakeholder-Centric and Systemic:** The Systemic Win3 Triangle provides a structured way to map communication dependencies and evaluate how messages travel across the ecosystem. For example, a patient's understanding of a therapy may be shaped by their HCP, who in turn is influenced by pharmaceutical representatives. Recognizing these interdependencies is key to designing communication that works in practice—not just in theory.
- **Compliance-Driven and Locally Adapted:** Strategies must be rooted in local regulatory expectations, with controls in place to ensure transparency, fairness, and legal integrity. Global consistency is important, but local nuance is essential.

Systemic Dynamics: From Fragmentation to Flow

The healthcare communication landscape is fragmented by default. Patients receive information from physicians, nurses, digital platforms, social media, advocacy groups, caregivers, and community forums. Any disconnect between these sources can disrupt the decision-making process. This is especially true in environments where the patient plays a more active role in treatment choices (, e.g., OTC or MedTech self-pay segments).

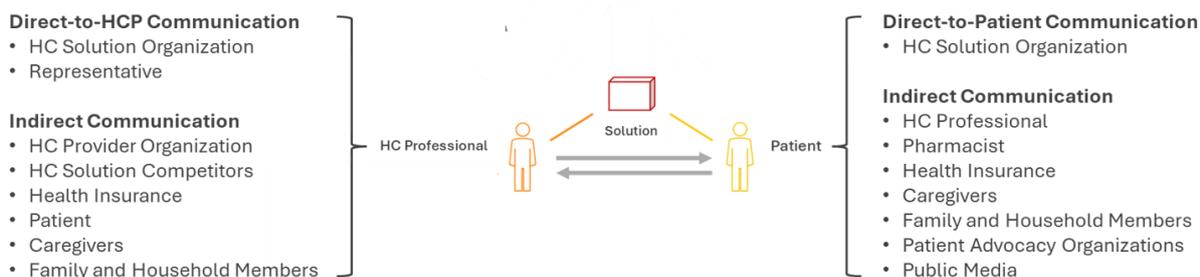


Figure 3: Communication Pathways Impacting the HCP-Patient-Engagement: Influences through direct and indirect modes of communication.

The Systemic Win3 Triangle helps clarify this complexity by visualizing not only who the stakeholders are, but **how they interact, what influences their decisions, and where the communication levers lie**. It prompts organizations to think beyond linear messaging and instead design for dynamic systems—where the goal is to enable aligned, timely, and compliant information flow.

Conclusion: Mapping Communication Pathways for Better Outcomes

In the evolving healthcare ecosystem, communication is not simply a function—it is a strategic capability that shapes access, adoption, and outcomes. By applying the Systemic Win3 Triangle, life sciences organizations can map communication flows, clarify stakeholder dependencies, and develop messaging strategies that are both compliant and impactful.

Whether through direct engagement with HCPs or indirect influence via patient advocacy groups, communication remains the common thread that links innovation to improved health.

Outlook

In the next installment of this mini-whitepaper series, we will explore the **product journey through the healthcare system**. Using the Systemic Win3 framework, we'll examine the key touchpoints, barriers, and enablers that shape the pathway from innovation to real-world adoption—across Rx pharma, OTC, and MedTech.

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