

# It's All About the Patient

How to Up Your Patient Engagement Game  
for Healthier Patients, and a Healthier  
Organization.

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THE TOTAL PATIENT ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

# Industry leaders have been throwing around the term “patient engagement” for years.

Helping patients become more active in their care, increasing adherence to care plans, improving healthy behaviors, and ultimately strengthening health outcomes is not a new concept. Increasingly, patient engagement strategies have been touted as a key tool providers can use to squeeze increasing value out of an overspent, underperforming system. But what’s lacking are cost-effective patient engagement strategies that providers can implement—on top of their already increasing workload—to produce better outcomes for their patients.



## **This whitepaper will cover the basics of patient engagement:**

what it is, why it matters, and specific (and doable!) steps providers can take to take their patient engagement practice to the next level and move the needle on healthy outcomes

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Patient engagement entails all the ways that patients interact with healthcare, and that encompasses many different layers.

## What is patient engagement?

It's not just how frequently they see a health care provider, though that could certainly be an important indicator for health. It also has to do with how they eat, whether they're addressing their social determinants of health, if they're tracking their symptoms at home, manually or via some wearable technology. Where patient experience has to do with the range of interactions patients have with the healthcare system, patient engagement goes further.

It encompasses how active patients are in their own care--how they maximize the value they take from the healthcare system and work to improve their health beyond interacting with a provider. Engaged patients have better experiences, and they also have better outcomes. Patient engagement encompasses a broad range of activities individuals undertake to improve their health, and it's no wonder many providers are scratching their heads about the best way to increase patient engagement.

## Patient engagement

/ pā-SHent ' in-gājment /

(noun)

supporting patients along their care journey to get the best possible health outcomes. It can include how patients interact with delivery of healthcare services in terms of their ability to access those services, their relationships with providers, their adherence to care plans and self-management skills, and their health literacy. It can also include activities that take place outside of the healthcare environment, such as healthy behaviors and access to community resources, that address non-clinical health determinants.

### Access to healthcare services

Is accessing care affordable, quick, convenient?

### Health behaviors

How likely are patients to improve their nutrition, physical activity, and other healthy behaviors?

### Community Connections

Are Patients able to access necessary community resources, like housing assistance or transportation?

### Patient-provider relationship

Are patients able to contact their provider with questions? Do they trust the provider?

### Care plan adherence and self-management

Do patients have the information they need and the motivation to manage their conditions?

### Health literacy

Do patients understand their conditions and their care plans?

# Patient engagement leads to better health, lower costs, and better value. Hands down.



## Clinical outcomes and safety

Studies have shown a positive association between high levels of patient engagement and clinical outcome measures like blood sugar level and blood pressure.<sup>2</sup>

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## Healthy behaviors

Indicators of healthy behaviors, like smoking status and obesity, are strongly correlated with patient engagement levels. Highly engaged patients are also more likely to access preventive care services like Pap smears and mammograms.<sup>1</sup>

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## Self management

Adults with chronic conditions benefit greatly from patient engagement interventions that support components of self-management including medications, exercise, nutrition, pain management, evaluating new treatments, etc.<sup>2</sup>

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## Patient experience

More highly engaged patients report better experiences.<sup>3</sup> Because they're more likely to benefit from health care services and better understand their care plans, they perceive more value from the healthcare experience.

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## Lower costs

Less engaged patients are more costly. One study found that less engaged patients generated up to 21% higher costs than highly engaged patients.<sup>4</sup>

# To thrive in an increasingly value-based world, providers must make patient engagement a priority.

## Ninety percent of what drives premature deaths happens outside of the health care delivery system.<sup>6</sup>

This means patients have to take an active approach to managing their own health. The two leading causes of death in this country include heart disease and cancer<sup>7</sup>, meaning over half of all deaths in this country are highly linked to tobacco use, alcohol consumption, diet, exercise, and all the social determinants of health like food security, education, housing quality, etc. that also directly impact health outcomes.<sup>8</sup>



## Chronic disease is killing more and more people every year.

Six in 10 adults in the US have a chronic disease like heart disease, Alzheimer’s, and diabetes. Two-thirds of these individuals are juggling two or more of these series conditions. Not only is chronic disease racking up the price tag of the U.S. healthcare system by \$3.3 trillion, it’s become the leading cause of death and disability in this country.<sup>9</sup>

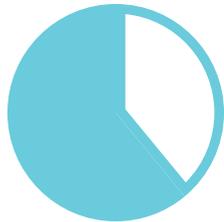




**18%**  
decrease in hospital stays in the US over the past 20 years.

## The average hospital stay in the United States has decreased 18% in the past 20 years.<sup>10</sup>

Part of this shorter hospital stays are necessitating increase self-management post-discharge. While this trend could improve patient outcomes, maximizing their time outside of the hospital and reducing risk of hospital-associated infection, it requires greater use of self-management techniques for recovery steps for and more deliberate follow-up procedures.<sup>11</sup>



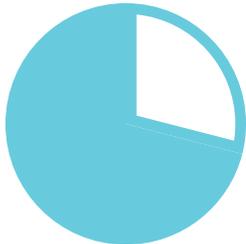
**61%**  
of American adults accessed health-related information online

## Patients are taking back the reins in healthcare.

In 2013, 61% of American adults went online to access health-related information, and trend continues to increase. Most of these “e-patients” go beyond looking for general articles and advice from sites like WebMD—they’re searching for information that specifically pertains to them, accessing user-generating health information to help them understand a health or medical issue. The two highest-rated search topics involve specific diseases or treatments and procedures.<sup>12</sup>

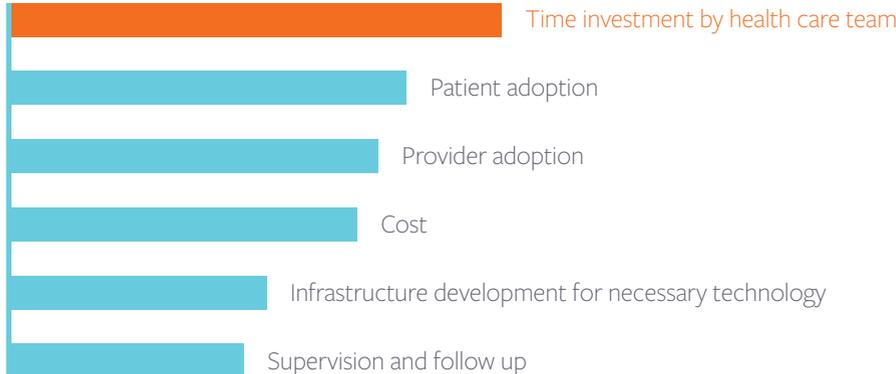
# Barriers to patient engagement like limited time and money are getting in the way.

Over 70% of surveyed clinicians and health administrators would not consider most of their patients to be fully engaged in their own care. They don't appear to be interested in making decisions jointly with their providers, are unlikely to adhere to their care plans, and generally do not seem to take an active role in improving their health status.<sup>13</sup>



**70%**  
of clinicians & health administrators would not consider most of their patients fully engaged in their own care<sup>13</sup>

## MOST FREQUENTLY CITED BARRIERS TO PATIENT ENGAGEMENT BY CLINICIANS & OTHER HEALTH LEADERS<sup>13</sup>



## Providers say one of the biggest barriers to improving patient engagement is time.<sup>14</sup>



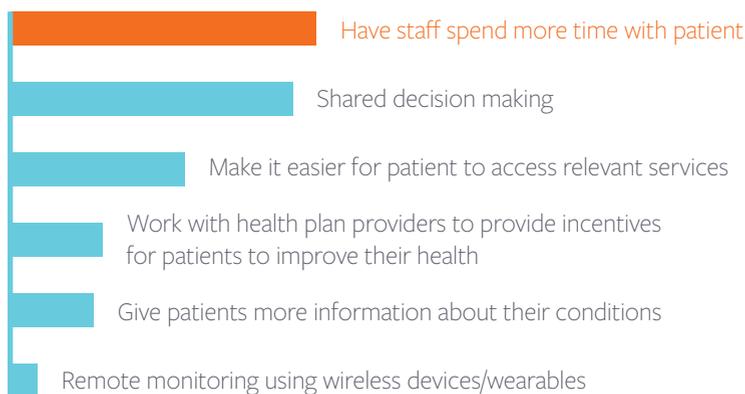
- They need to spend more time with their patients to participate in shared decision making, review treatment plans, support self-management practices, etc. But their time is increasingly limited. Their schedules are crammed, their administrative load increasing, and appointment slots are getting shorter and shorter.
- Providers need that time to spend with patients to improve health literacy. National surveys have indicated that only around 12% of U.S. adults are highly proficient health literacy skills.<sup>15</sup> Providers want to be able to support their patients in asking the right questions, getting information from appropriate sources, and making complex decisions about their treatment and care plans.
- Treatment and care plans are becoming increasingly complicated. Close to a third of U.S. adults have high blood pressure<sup>16</sup>, and 86% of those at least one comorbidity like diabetes, depression, and rheumatoid arthritis.<sup>17</sup> Rapidly rising rates of comorbidities are necessitating individualized care plans with specific attention paid to individuals' medication list, health behaviors, and goals.



## Finding value in a patient engagement strategy starts with patient-centered, intuitive technology.

Patients are looking for ways to make engaging in complex health decisions more productive, but they may lack the tools they need to do so. Here are the specific steps you can take to implement a successful patient engagement strategy that's both simple and cost-effective.

### MOST EFFECTIVE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES CITED BY CLINICIANS AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATORS<sup>13</sup>



# Three steps to own patient engagement

## 1. Save time to allow providers more time with patients.

Automating time-consuming tasks and front-loading those tasks before the patient walks through the doors of your organization can help maximize providers' time with patients, addressing the number one barrier to patient engagement. This allows the entire care team to work at the top of their licenses and maximize their time addressing patients' needs.



**Reduce the phone call load of the practice by implementing a sophisticated online scheduling system** and automating referral outreach, recall, and reminders to save about an hour a day per provider.<sup>18</sup>



**Take care of the intake process before the patient presents for an appointment** This will save significant in-office time, give providers a heads up as to the patient's symptoms and major concerns, and prevent any surprises the day-of.



**Send patients materials in advance to help them prepare for their appointment.** Not only can this save a significant amount of valuable provider time during the appointment, it helps spark questions the patient can get a chance to ask the provider directly.

## 2. Give patients the tools they need to be engaged in their care.

Patient engagement has to begin with improving, and streamlining, access to care. Providers need to allow patients to schedule and reschedule appointments as necessary, contact their providers with questions, and access information about their care plan, prescriptions, appointment history, and more with ease and convenience.



**Implement a sophisticated online scheduling system.** Make sure patients are able to schedule—and, if necessary, reschedule—appointments with their providers on-demand. Not only does this make the process of scheduling appointments easier and more convenient for patients, it saves staff time spent on the phone, checking calendars, and manually attempting to fill cancellation slots.



**Adopt a platform that allows secure messaging between patients and providers.** Giving patients and providers the necessary space to address questions, monitor symptoms, and update care plans as needed is critical to patient engagement.



**Drive patients to access their health information online.** Multiple studies have looked at the link between patient access to their health records and self-efficacy control over their health status for patients with hypertension and diabetes as well as pregnant women.<sup>19</sup> Providers can begin laying the foundation for this type of patient empowerment by encouraging access to patient portals. Currently portal use by patients hovers between 15-30%.<sup>20</sup> But pushing out portal access or other relevant health information via a text-first solution, which boasts up to a 99% contact rate<sup>21</sup>, substantially improves patient access to health information.

### 3. Target ongoing outreach to high-risk patients.

Be proactive about improving patient engagement beyond the patients and providers spend together during a scheduled appointment. Reaching out to high-risk patients with specific chronic conditions and comorbidities can improve self-management practices and offer these patients the necessary support they need to exercise control over their care plans



#### **Implement technology that can auto-populate lists**

based on CPT and ICD-10 codes to target messages to patients with specific conditions or who are due for specific procedures.



#### **Make sure the content of the messages improves health literacy.**

Keep the message language in the patient's preferred language, and vary the information type from text to pictures, videos, and interactive quiz questions.



## Spotlight on Houston Endocrinology:

Dr. Medhavi Jogi, an endocrinologist based in Houston, Texas, began sending videos to new patients with basic information about their diabetes diagnosis. It helped provide patients with the information they needed to be prepared for their appointment and start thinking about key steps in their care plan. By going outside of the four walls of his practice, Dr. Jogi was able to both decrease the time each patient spent in the office, contributing to a better overall patient experience, and increase the productivity of each appointment.



“When the patient arrives at our practice, they’re much more engaged,” he said. “Armed with some basic knowledge, they come ready with thoughtful questions, and the appointment is much more productive.”

**Dr. Medhavi Jogi**

ENDOCRINOLOGIST  
HOUSTON, TX

# Implementing a purposeful patient engagement strategy will transform your organization.

## Better patient experience

Highly engaged patients are much more likely to report better health care experiences than disengaged patients.<sup>22</sup> When patients leave your organization feeling confident and in control of their own health, they will exhibit greater loyalty to your organization.

## Better outcomes

Highly engaged patients are more likely to find success in their health goals. When they better understand their care plans, have solid self-management techniques, practice healthy behaviors, and can communicate with a provider when a new issue develops, they are more likely to get and stay healthy.

## Increased success in value-based care

Finally, highly engaged patients cost less, on average, than disengaged patients. Because they're getting the most value out of their healthcare appointments and better controlling their conditions, organizations whose patients are highly engaged can find better success in value-based care.

**For a free patient engagement consultation and to learn more about how your organization can implement simple and effective patient engagement technology, go to [www.lumahealth.io](http://www.lumahealth.io).**

### Sources

1) [www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0452#EX1FN4](http://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0452#EX1FN4) 2) [www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0452#EX1FN4](http://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0452#EX1FN4) 3) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1955271/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1955271/) 4) [nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19584763](http://nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19584763) 5) [www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2012.1064](http://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2012.1064) 6) [www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa073350](http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa073350) 7) [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67\\_06.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_06.pdf) 8) [www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk](http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk) 9) [www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm) 10) OECD (2019), Length of hospital stay (indicator). doi: 10.1787/8dda6b7a-en (Accessed on 10 January 2019) 11) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11112230](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11112230) 12) [www.pewinternet.org/2009/06/11/a-shifting-landscape/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2009/06/11/a-shifting-landscape/) 13) [catalyst.nejm.org/patient-engagement-report-improved-engagement-leads-better-outcomes-better-tools-needed/](http://catalyst.nejm.org/patient-engagement-report-improved-engagement-leads-better-outcomes-better-tools-needed/) 14) [catalyst.nejm.org/patient-engagement-report-improved-engagement-leads-better-outcomes-better-tools-needed/](http://catalyst.nejm.org/patient-engagement-report-improved-engagement-leads-better-outcomes-better-tools-needed/) 15) [www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/training/page669.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/training/page669.html) 16) [www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/faqs.htm) 17) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5836318](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5836318) 18) [blog.sprucehealth.com/doctors-losing-hour-day-phone-call-overhead/](http://blog.sprucehealth.com/doctors-losing-hour-day-phone-call-overhead/) 19) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4078277/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4078277/) 20) [www.gao.gov/assets/690/683388.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/683388.pdf) 21) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4831598/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4831598/) 22) [www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2012.1061](http://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2012.1061)

**We make smart, simple, and intuitive technology that streamlines the entire patient journey.**

Learn more about how choosing Luma Health as your technology partner can boost your success in a value-based environment, all while working toward your goals of healthier and happier patients at **[lumahealth.io](https://lumahealth.io)**.

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