

**Physicians “Insulate”
Themselves from Traditional
Methods of Promotion,
Seek Information from
Their Own Channels**

**Physicians Want Patient
Feedback About Their
Treatment Experience**

White Paper

“What Did the Doctor Say?” “How Is the Patient Doing?”

Patient-Physician communications programs can bridge the gap between office visits, ensure that patients stay on track with their prescribed treatment and let physicians know how their patients are responding to treatment.

Introduction

Hectic day-to-day practice makes it almost impossible for physicians and patients to communicate between office visits. During patient visits, communication is often hurried with neither physician nor patient feeling that all of their information was fully communicated or understood. Yet, more than ever, physicians report that they want to know how medications they prescribe are working for their patients.¹

If a physician sees a rep, 85% of the time it's for less than two minutes.² Over time, the role of the sales rep in many cases has been reduced to that of a basic “brand reminder.” On July 1, 2002, new guidelines on appropriate, practice-enhancing interactions between sales representatives and healthcare professionals took effect. The PhRMA Code on interactions with HCPs eliminated tactics such as gift giving and entertainment that many pharmaceutical sales representatives had employed to gain access to busy physicians in favor of those that enhance the practice of medicine. Since that went into effect, physicians have even less time to spend with reps. More than ever, reps need to identify and deliver information, in a concise and effective manner, that will fortify the physician's practice and, by so doing, re-gain physician trust.

Relevant information might offer the physician:

- Reduced treatment risk and/or tools to make the doctor's life easier
- Education about medication, without interfering with the doctor's practice
- Credible demonstration of how a product works with various patients
- Information of direct benefit to the physician's patients

Technology has a significant role to play. Physicians are increasingly using technology to access knowledge and to interact with patients. A recent Harris Interactive poll of 400 practicing physicians found that 89% of the physicians routinely use the Internet and two-thirds said that they seek medical information online.

Personal digital assistants (PDA's) have established a foothold in medicine, bringing critical information directly to physicians in the exam room. Today, more than 50% of practicing physicians use PDA's with expected growth of more than 75% by year-end 2007.³ Additionally, office-based PCs, available in most practices, are now used by more than 87% of physicians in a practice setting.⁴ Changes in treatment guidelines, concerns about patient safety, efforts to contain costs, time limitations, and better informed patients are driving the need to have more and better information at the point of care where key decisions are made.

Physicians want to know how patients are responding to prescribed medications and often don't receive feedback. Patient feedback is an important element in the patient-physician dialogue, and is highly valued by physicians. Sixty-eight percent of physicians surveyed by InfoMedics indicated that if they received patient-reported feedback, they would discuss it with the patient.⁵ Nine out of ten physicians indicated that they would file a feedback report in the patient's medical record. Upon review of a sample feedback report, physicians rated its usefulness an average of 3.9 out of 5.⁵

Patients Want to Partner with Their Physicians in Managing Their Healthcare

Technology Can Add Personalization and Responsiveness to the Dynamics of a Physician- Patient Relationship

Physicians also state that patient feedback should be part of their daily practice, but there are few channels available to receive this information and their staff has limited time to collect it.⁶ Eighty-six percent of physicians surveyed stated that feedback from their own patients supported their decision to prescribe a medication. Ninety-eight percent stated that patient experience information offered them a valuable way to assess the effectiveness of a medication.⁷ In other InfoMedics' research, many physicians stated their desire to receive as much information as possible from patients or about patients, as this would put them in a better position to make appropriate, effective treatment decisions.⁸

Patients benefit from (and are eager for) information about diseases and treatment options. The more they learn about disease symptoms and prescription therapies, the better equipped they feel to engage in a more informed discussion with their health care provider. With increasing frequency, patients are responding to DTC advertising and seeking answers to their health questions through the Internet. An FDA study reported that 62% of those who have seen or heard DTC advertising said that the ads helped them to have better discussions with their physicians about their healthcare needs.⁹ A study by the Harvard School of Public Health of patients who visited their doctor because of a DTC advertisement found that 25% were diagnosed with a new condition as a result of that discussion.¹⁰

Patients want more from their relationship with their physician too.¹¹ Patients want more access and more time to discuss their conditions and treatment options. In one InfoMedics study, 95% of patients reported that providing feedback to their doctor made them more aware of their condition and 79% reported that the program helped relieve their worries about their condition.¹² Across a number of InfoMedics' studies, 66-75% of patients participated in programs because their physicians asked them to or because they wanted to provide treatment response information back to their physician.¹³ With recent news headlines about the potential side effects of various prescription medicines, patients are likely to be even more eager to research medications and have productive conversations with their doctor about their needs and concerns.

Patients are seeking online relationships with their physicians between visits. A poll of adults found that 90% of those with access to the Internet would like to be able to communicate with their physician online.¹⁴

- 77% of respondents would like to ask their physicians questions online
- 71% would like to make appointments online
- 71% would also like to fill prescriptions online
- 70% would like to get test results from their physician online
- 56% said the availability of online communication with a physician would influence their choice of a physician

Another study found that patients may be more loyal to the convenience of the Internet than they are to their own physicians.¹⁵ Sixty-three percent of respondents said they would transfer to a different practice if it offered a website with credible information, appointment scheduling and secure communications.

In summary, the current health care environment requires new, more open channels of communication between physicians and patients. The environment is consumed with patients seeking clear and personal information amidst the clutter of Internet sites, DTC advertising, and news headlines about

pharmaceutical companies and products. Add to that the intense pressure on physicians to respond with the very latest and most relevant clinical information for a particular patient within the confines of a limited office visit.

Given these conditions in the health care environment, patient-physician communications must be approached differently. Patient-physician communications require a sophisticated platform that is personal, relevant and delivered at the point of care when the critical prescribing decisions are being made. With a correctly implemented communications platform, physicians can be more confident in their prescribing decision and patients can understand their condition and treatment better and stay compliant. The results drive more positive treatment outcomes: the ultimate goal for physicians and patients.

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