ROYAL SOLUTIONS GROUP

HOW INFORMATION MOVES

E-Book

# The Complete Guide to Patient Engagement

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Royal Solutions Group is here to assist if you're interested in onboarding practical software solutions to help you invest in patient engagement.

Contact Us Today

The healthcare landscape is changing. Gone are the days when patients were passive actors in their healthcare journey. Patient engagement—or strategies that invite patients to be active participants in their care—is the backbone of modern healthcare. And, going forward, it will only be more critical for forward-thinking healthcare practices.

Are you interested in equipping your team with the tools they need to engage patients seamlessly without increasing their own workloads? Here's what you need to know.
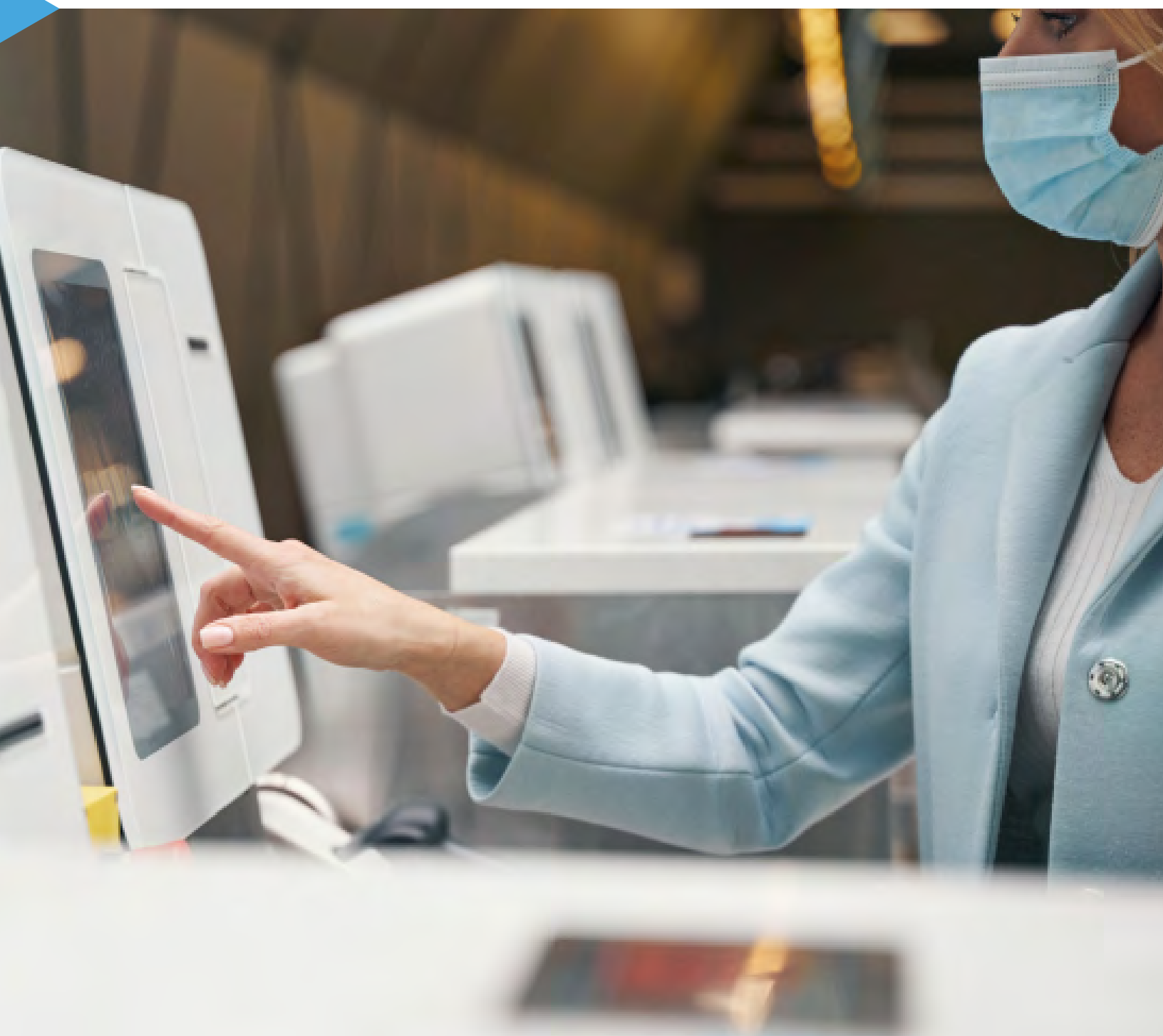
What Is Patient Engagement?
A Comprehensive Definition

Patient engagement refers to a patient's active involvement in their healthcare. Opportunities for engagement encompass every touchpoint and interaction you may have with a patient, including:

- Electronic resources, such as patient health portals or shared digital records.

- Digital interactions, including ads, blog posts, and social media posts.

- Email communications, from appointment reminders to newsletters.

- Text messages, whether they are medication reminders or feedback requests.

- Phone calls about care discussions, follow-ups, or appointment confirmations.

- In-person visits, such as consultations, health check-ups, or therapy sessions.

But here's the twist:
Patient engagement is more than just these interactions, and it's not just something that patients need to do on their own.

Patient engagement done well is an all-encompassing approach fueled by every tool available to a savvy healthcare team. It ensures that every piece of information—from the nitty-gritty details of practice logistics to intricate, personal health data—is communicated effectively and safely.

Patient engagement is also the art of building trust, fostering relationships, and ensuring patients feel empowered to participate in their health journey.

In this guide, we'll show you how to master this art.   >>

The Importance of Patient Engagement for Healthcare Providers, Administrators, and Practices

Are there practical reasons to invest in patient engagement? Great question. Patient engagement leads to many tangible benefits, including:


▶ **Improved patient outcomes**.
When patients are actively involved, they're more likely to understand and stick to treatment plans, which can reduce medical errors and bolster patient safety.

▶ **Effective communication.**
Open dialogue between providers and patients is critical for effective healthcare. Encouraging patients to voice concerns and seek clarity builds trust and refines care plans.

▶ **More efficient healthcare delivery.**
Patients who understand their care and feel equipped to talk to their providers often schedule fewer unnecessary visits. This frees up resources for those in genuine need and streamlines crowded appointment schedules.
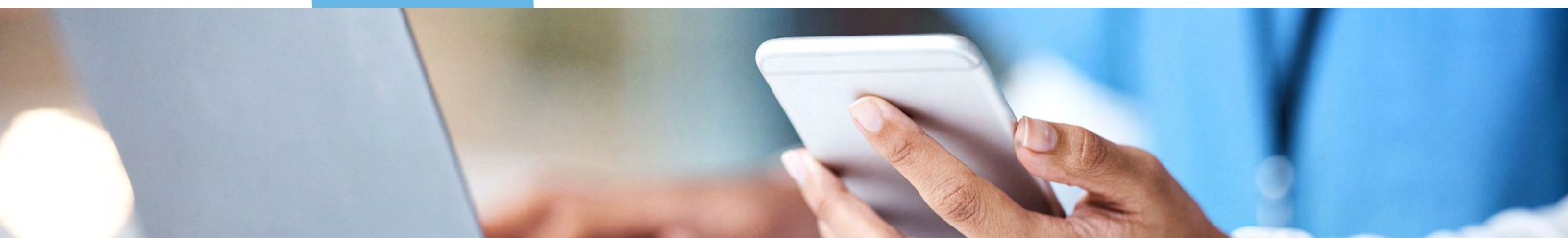
▶ **More use of provided patient healthcare tools.**
Engaged patients are more likely to use patient portals, online scheduling systems, and telehealth services, reducing administrative burdens and ensuring timely care.

▶ **Enhanced regulatory compliance.**
Engaged patients often provide more comprehensive medical histories and feedback, ensuring that medical records are thorough and up-to-date—a key part of many healthcare regulations.

▶ **Enhanced practice reputation.**
Practices with highly engaged patients often enjoy positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations. This can significantly enhance the practice's reputation, attracting more patients and top-tier talent.

▶ **Improved financial health.**
Engaged patients are more likely to show up for their appointments, reducing wastages of practitioner and administrative time (and, of course, increasing billing potential).

Did you know?
Patient engagement programs can reduce readmission rates by up to 14 percent, translating to fewer complications and reduced healthcare costs.

The Current State of Patient Engagement in Healthcare

Seeing all the benefits of patient engagement may prompt a relevant question: *Are modern practices focusing on patient engagement as much as they should?*

Forward-thinking practices may be all-in on this trend, but more traditional approaches still exist. The ways practices work to increase patient engagement are also changing. As the healthcare industry moves forward, it's clear that virtual and digital services are the latest way practices champion patient engagement.

Now more than ever, patients demand seamless access to digital or medical services and meaningful educational materials to make informed decisions about their well-being.

This common interest doesn't mean that laying the groundwork for increased patient engagement is easy.

Many healthcare institutions grapple with challenges on the way to ideal patient engagement, such as:

Finances
The costs associated with implementing new technologies and training staff can be significant.

Resistance to Change
Not all stakeholders are quick to embrace new methods, especially in an industry as regulated as healthcare.

Staffing
Ensuring your staff is trained and comfortable with new technologies and engagement methods is crucial.

Of course, this doesn't mean there aren't ways you can overcome these challenges.

Did you know?
The World Health Organization has recognized the need for increased patient engagement, making "Engaging Patients for Patient Safety" the theme for its World Patient Safety Day in 2023.

Overcoming Challenges in Providing Engaging Experiences

Do you see hurdles standing between you and optimal patient engagement? That's a realistic (and resolvable) mindset. Here's what we would recommend tackling:

Financial Constraints

- Seek out grants designed for healthcare innovation.

- Research to find tech companies that provide access to cutting-edge patient engagement solutions at reasonable prices.

- Instead of a complete overhaul, make gradual tech or process upgrades, allowing your practice to spread out costs over time.

Resistance to Change

- Introduce new technologies or engagement methods in smaller pilot programs, allowing your staff to acclimate and provide feedback.

- Offer regular training sessions to ensure your team understands the benefits and functionalities of new systems.

Staffing Constraints

- Use telehealth to extend the reach of your current staff, allowing them to serve more patients without physical constraints.

- Collaborate with local universities to offer internship programs, bringing in fresh talent and additional hands without a long-term commitment.

To help engage your patients directly, consider focusing on community engagement, whether in person or over social media.

For example, you could organize community health workshops or webinars to position your practice as a thought leader and build trust. This not only enhances patient engagement, but can also attract potential new patients and staff to your practice.

Did you know?
Seventy-two percent of Gen Xers use online platforms to research medical professionals, and as millennials and Gen Zers age, that percentage will likely rise. Consider investing in your website and boosting engagement on review platforms and social media to meet that need.

Practical Recommendations for Enhancing Patient Engagement

Now that we discussed ways to overcome patient engagement obstacles, let's go the extra mile. Are there specific, actionable ways you can invest in patient engagement starting today?

There are. Here are our recommendations:

Eliminate redundancies.

Every redundant step in a patient's journey is a potential drop-off point. Streamlining processes ensures patients are not bogged down by repetitive paperwork or unnecessary steps. (This will help your team out too!)

Boost transparency.

No one likes hidden surprises, especially regarding health and finances. When patients feel they're getting the complete picture and trust that the estimates they're receiving are accurate, they're more likely to engage, ask questions, and follow through.

Invest in education.

Providing resources—whether pamphlets, videos, or workshops—empowers patients. When they understand their condition and the rationale behind treatments, they're more likely to adhere to care plans and actively participate in their health journey.

Prioritize ease of access.

Simplifying the steps involved in scheduling appointments online, attending telehealth consultations, and accessing test results can significantly boost engagement. The less friction patients encounter, the more likely they will stay engaged.

Personalize when possible.

Use technology to offer personalized health tips, reminders, and care plans based on individual patient data. A personalized approach can make patients feel valued and understood, increasing trust and engagement.

Measuring the Success of Patient Engagement Initiatives

Have you implemented any of the above? Congratulations—you're well on your way toward realizing the benefits of patient engagement.

If you're looking for ways to ensure you're on the right track, that's smart! Here are a few ways to ensure your patient engagement strategies hit the mark:

1   **Track your patient satisfaction.**
Timely services, easy-to-understand reports, and a patient-friendly approach should significantly influence satisfaction levels. Regularly surveying patients about their experiences and seeking feedback can provide invaluable insights.

2   **Monitor patient retention rates.**
If patients continue to choose your practice for their healthcare needs, it's a testament to their trust and satisfaction with the services provided.

3   **Analyze digital engagement metrics.**
Review metrics such as website visits, patient portal logins, and app usage. High engagement on these platforms suggests that patients find them useful, which can directly result from your engagement initiatives.

4   **Evaluate referral rates.**
A satisfied and engaged patient is more likely to refer friends and family. Tracking the number of new patients coming through referrals can give insights into the effectiveness of your patient engagement strategies.

5   **Assess treatment adherence rates.**
Engaged patients are more likely to follow treatment plans. Monitoring adherence rates for medication, therapy sessions, or follow-up appointments can provide a clear picture of how well patients engage with their care plans.

Ideally, you'll also notice efficiency gains and a better reputation for your practice over the long term. Always remember that enhanced patient engagement and (ultimately) satisfaction is your priority.

Did you know?

A 2022 Journal of Patient Experience review reported that patient engagement can "improve both treatment outcomes and consequently patient satisfaction and health, as well as the productivity of the service provider." This highlights the dual benefits of patient engagement for individuals and the healthcare system.

Are you interested in taking the Royal Path to Enhanced Patient Engagement?

Elevating patient engagement is critical in today's healthcare landscape. Royal Solutions Group is here to assist if you're interested in onboarding practical software solutions to help you invest in patient engagement. Check out our radiology workflow solutions here, or contact our team for more information.

Contact Us Today

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