TeleVox

Putting Hours Back in Healthcare Staff's Day with Digital Care Programs

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In the ever-changing healthcare industry, one challenge that remains consistent across healthcare organizations is overworked and understaffed departments. Front desk staff, nurses, and even physicians on the front lines of patient care are tasked with a wide set of responsibilities, ranging from important direct patient care to tedious administrative duties such as manual patient outreach. These non-clinical tasks are taking highly trained professionals away from patient care, leading to wasted time and staff burnout on top of jeopardized patient outcomes and increased readmission rates.

Fortunately, advances in digital technology are streamlining patient engagement, especially in the areas of chronic disease management, and surgery preparation and recovery. In this eBook, TeleVox will explore current staffing, administrative, and efficiency-related challenges facing the healthcare industry and how automated digital care programs are purpose-built to help care teams prioritize high-value patient care while reducing readmissions and financial costs.

The Challenge of Overworked and Understaffed Healthcare Departments

The American Hospital Association projects that America will face a shortage of 124,000 physicians by 2033 and will need to hire at least 200,000 nurses per year to meet increased demand and replace retiring nurses.[1] Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the growing problem among healthcare professionals. In fact, according to a report by Morning Consult, 30 percent of healthcare workers either quit their jobs or were laid off during the pandemic, while another 31 percent have considered leaving, primarily due to the stress of worker shortages and increased workloads.[2]

But the problem of staffing runs much deeper than just the last few years after the pandemic. A quick search will show you headline[3] after headline[4] about staffing shortages and burnout long before the pandemic ever made it to North America. And the reasons cited are almost always the same:

- **Not enough time spent on patient care**
- **Too much time spent on paperwork and other administrative tasks**

Among 55 studies assessing the effectiveness of digital maternal patient education for pregnant women, 38 (69 percent) reported significant patient outcomes, with the main benefits of increased knowledge (83.3 percent), emotional benefits (73.7 percent), and behavioral changes (60.6 percent).

27% Recent studies have shown that doctors spend as little as 27 percent of the workday with patients.[5]

$60 BILLION At the same time, the U.S. healthcare system spent $60 billion on administrative tasks in 2022, up $18 billion from 2021.[6]

The Importance of Patient Communication

One area that blurs the line between patient care and administrative tasks is that of patient engagement and communication outside the exam room. In today's technology-driven world, it is impossible – and unnecessary – to constrain all communication to face-to-face conversations. Instead, physicians and nurses must communicate with patients via text (SMS), emails, patient portals, phone calls, and more.

Why is this broad range of communication so important? Let's consider a few examples:

- Patients who received short message service (SMS) with colonoscopy preparation instructions had a six percent greater rate of adequate bowel preparation than the control group.[7] A repeat colonoscopy could cost a patient hundreds of dollars in excess medical bills.

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83.3 percent reported significant patient outcomes, with the main benefit of increased knowledge

73.7 percent reported emotional benefits

60.6 percent reported behavioral changes [8]

| 0 | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 |
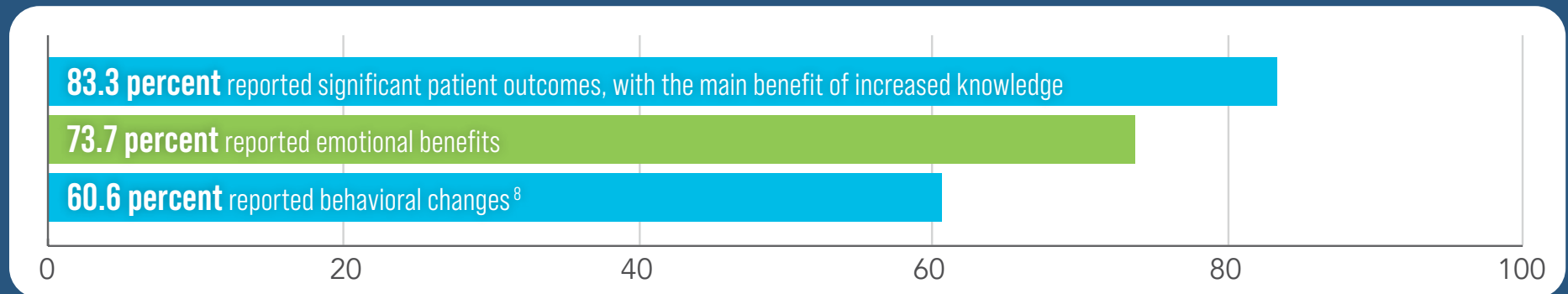
- UCSF found that 14 percent of readmissions of patients with end-stage disease could have been avoided if there had been a documented goals-of-care discussion.[9] Readmissions cost hospitals an average of $15,200 per patient.[10]

There are clearly many benefits of effective communication with patients, ranging from happier, compliant patients (who tend to drive more referrals) to lower readmission rates and fewer reimbursement penalties. While many healthcare providers are asking whether they can afford additional staff to handle patient outreach and education, perhaps the greater question is whether they can afford not to address their patient communication needs.

The Challenge

So, what's a healthcare organization to do? On the one hand, you have staff who feel burnout from handling administrative tasks instead of the patient care they are trained to do. On the other hand, patient outcomes are highly dependent on effective communication and the availability of healthcare staff for personalized attention.

The Solution: Automated Digital Care Programs

When it comes to addressing the challenges noted above, it's critical that staff efficiencies are maximized. McKinsey reports that implementing digital technologies in healthcare delivery could help realize cost savings of more than ten percent,[11] and approximately 20 percent of a nurse's shift time can be reduced through tech enablement.[12] When you have a patient population that needs immersive communication and a staff that is burned out on administrative tasks, it only makes sense that patient engagement is an area that is ripe for digitization.

To that end, Digital Care Programs from TeleVox help healthcare organizations bridge the gap between understaffed and overworked employees and their patients who have ongoing needs for regular communication to ensure continuity of care. Instead of manually calling patients, responding to text messages, or sending emails with instructions, a digital care program takes the burden out of the staff's hands and automates these important communication elements while tailoring to the patient's unique situation.

Patients continue to engage via voice, web, and SMS without the need for an app or a login. However, with a Digital Care Program, instead of a nurse or doctor initiating the conversation, the automated program sends just-in-time notifications and educational content to steer patients along their care journey. Using customizable artificial intelligence that pulls information only from authorized resources, patients get information they need, when they need it, without waiting on hold or leaving voicemails, thus reducing the administrative burden on staff.

Just as important, however, is the smart triage functionality that intelligently alerts care teams to timely triage situations. Instead of constantly monitoring inboxes or answering machines, medical staff can turn their attention to patient care with confidence that developing situations will be brought to their attention immediately.

Digital Care Programs are especially helpful for chronic disease management, surgery preparation, and recovery situations. In these cases, digital care programs boost care plan adherence and allow staff to track patient-reported outcomes and monitor the progress of goals. With frequent communication deployed on an automated schedule, patients are empowered to be a bigger part of their healthcare journey.

The impact of this enhanced and improved patient engagement is profound. According to Advisory Board, on a macro level, patient engagement can:

- **Eliminate $100 billion in preventable medical costs per year from care plan nonadherence**

- **Result in a 21.5 percentage point increase in patient satisfaction for hospital**

- **Lead to a 29 percent decrease in adverse event rate[13]**

Expected Time-Saving Results from TeleVox's Digital Care Programs

The top reasons why nurses decide to leave their jobs are led by feeling undervalued or underpaid by the organization they work for, followed closely by a lack of work-life balance and an unmanageable workload.[14] Or put more simply, they need more time to focus on the tasks they were hired to do and would like better recognition or compensation to do it.

Fortunately, TeleVox's Digital Care Programs are designed to help alleviate both challenges.

On the workload front, full-time employees in a healthcare setting can save roughly three hours per day that previously would be spent on manual patient engagement and communication actions by implementing TeleVox's Digital Care Programs. A big driver of that time savings is a 35 percent reduction in EHR inbox messages, allowing staff to step away from their computer or tablet and focus on the patients in the building.

In fact, a traditional care program ratio would be expected to be around 350 patients for every care manager or full-time employee. With TeleVox's Digital Care Programs, that ratio grows exponentially to 1,500 patients for every care manager or full-time employee.

Healthcare offices that implement TeleVox's Digital Care Programs can expect to see a **94 percent patient satisfaction score** and a **14 percent reduction** in their 30-day readmission rates.

94% patient satisfaction score

14% reduction in readmission

We now have the perfect equation for a hospital or physician's office that is looking to grow: happier, healthier patients who are more inclined to give referrals and higher HCAHPS scores, plus a staff that has more time to offer their patients with less burdensome administrative tasks, equals room for patient growth. More patients result in greater revenue, which can then be invested back into the organization in the form of higher salaries, additional staff, and more training opportunities.

Four Patient Challenges That Digital Care Programs Solve

It is clear that TeleVox's Digital Care Programs provide time savings and help alleviate staff burdens, but they also solve four key patient challenges as well: patient education, inadequate transitional care, inefficient chronic disease management, and health equity. Below, we look at examples from each one.

Patient Education: Consider the colonoscopy prep example shared earlier. Studies have shown that 20 to 44 percent of patients inadequately prep for the procedure.[15] The risks of this inadequate prep range from needing a repeat procedure to missed lesions or increased procedure time, all of which cost both the patient and the physician valuable time and money. However, with automated reminders deployed by the Digital Care Programs at regular intervals leading up to the procedure, adequate bowel preparation rates will grow significantly.

Benefits of Digital Care Programs

Inadequate Transitional Care: The average hospital readmission rate is 14.5 percent.[16] At an average cost of $15,200 per patient, readmissions continue to be a major industry headache. They also lead to lower quality scores and lost revenue due to reimbursement penalties. With a Digital Care Program in place, hospitals and providers can maintain regular communication with patients upon discharge, ensuring instructions are being followed to reduce the readmission rate.

Inefficient Chronic Disease Management: Living with a chronic condition is challenging, but not knowing or not adhering to care guidelines makes it much worse. Studies in patients with chronic diseases find that 40 to 50 percent are non-adherent to drug treatment.[17] This leads to bad clinical outcomes, negative patient experiences, and a higher readmission rate. However, a Digital Care Program can send medication reminders and serve as a regular check-in point to assess how well the patient is adhering to the care guidelines put in place.
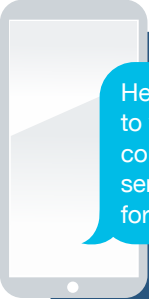
Health Equity: Large portions of the population are underserved due to several factors, ranging from healthcare staffing and technology gaps to geographical and financial barriers. This population tends to use the emergency department more frequently, raising costs for what could otherwise be treated in an office visit or outpatient setting. Consider the case of a pregnant woman who struggles to make every appointment in her pregnancy journey. Digital Care Programs can automatically send text messages about common experiences at various trimesters and receive a report back from the patient about which ones she encounters.

Getting Started with Digital Care Programs from TeleVox
Put time back into your staff's day and give your patients the information they need to maximize their outcomes. TeleVox's Digital Care Programs are fully customizable and will unleash the power of clinical workflow automation to ensure better outcomes for your patients, while elevating your care teams to provide superior care while boosting efficiency.

Digital Care Programs: Colonoscopy Prep

A welcome message with educational links

Hello Tim, we are reaching out to you regarding your upcoming colonoscopy. If you would like us to send you some helpful information for this procedure, please reply Yes.
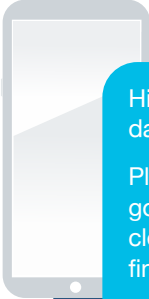
Yes

Great! Here is the checklist for colonoscopy prep: Link

If you take vitamins, iron pills, or liquid antacids, please stop taking them today.

View FAQs here: Link

3 days before the procedure

Hi Tim, your procedure is in 3 days.

Please begin a low-fiber diet. A good bowel prep will result in a clean colon, which helps doctors find cancers and other problems.

Dr. Smith would like you to follow these instructions:

Please avoid popcorn, seeds, nuts, salad, corn, beans, peas, whole grains, whole wheat bread, oatmeal, raw fruits, or raw vegetables until after your procedure.

Well-cooked fruits and vegetables, tofu, daily products, creamy nut butter, white rice, and bread are recommended.

1 day before the procedure

Hi Tim, your procedure is scheduled for tomorrow.

Follow a clear liquid diet only. Don't eat or drink solid food, products, or alcohol.
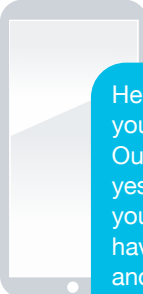
At 6:00 PM, fill your prescription laxative with water up the fill line. Drink half of the laxative. Save the other half for tomorrow.

At 9:00 PM, take 2 gas pills with 8 ounces of clear liquid.

At 10:00 PM, take 2 gas pills with 8 ounces of clear liquid. Stop eating Jell-O or broth. You are okay to continue with all other clear liquids.

Digital Care Programs: Pneumonia

Discharge - Day 1 message

Hello, we're reaching out to check on you after your recent hospital stay. Our records show you left the hospital yesterday. We want to make sure that you are making progress and that you have the resources you need for care and support. If you are the patient, reply 1. If you are a family member or caregiver for the patient, reply 2.
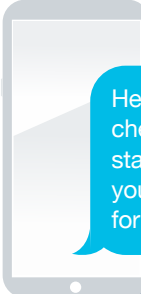
1

Now, let's see how you are feeling. Reply 1 if you are feeling better. Reply 2 if you are feeling about the same as yesterday. Reply 3 if you are feeling worse.

1

We're glad to hear that.

3 days after discharge

Hello, we're reaching out again to check on you after your recent hospital stay. If you are the patient, reply 1. If you are a family member or caregiver for the patient, reply 2.
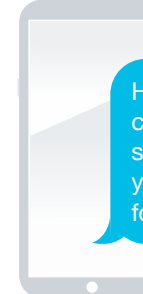
1

During our previous check-ins, we asked about scheduling an appointment. We'd like to see you in the office next week to see how you are progressing. Press 1 if you already have an appointment scheduled. Press 2 if you need to schedule an appointment.

1

That's great. We'll reach out to remind you when it gets closer.

4 days after discharge

Hello, we're reaching out for your final check-in after your recent hospital stay. If you are the patient, reply 1. If you are a family member or caregiver for the patient, reply 2.

1

During our previous check-ins, we asked about scheduling an appointment. We'd like to see you in the office next week to see how you are progressing. Reply 1 if you already have an appointment scheduled. Press 2 if you need to schedule an appointment.
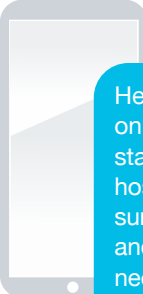
1

That's great. We'll reach out to remind you when it gets closer.

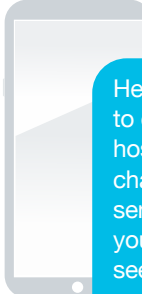# Digital Care Programs: COPD

Discharge - Day 1 message

Hello, we're reaching out to check on you after your recent hospital stay. Our records show you left the hospital yesterday. We want to make sure that you are making progress and that you have the resources you need for care and support. Since Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) was one of your discharge diagnoses, we'd like to share some educational materials about the condition.

Reply 1 if you'd like to do this now. Reply 2 if you'd like us to reach out in a few hours

2

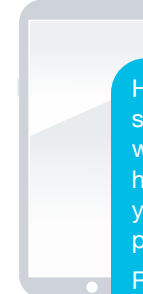OK, we'll reach out in a couple of hours.

7 days after discharge

Hello, we're reaching out again to check on you after your recent hospital stay. Hopefully, you had a chance to review the information we sent a few days ago. We'd like to see you in the office within one week to see how you are progressing.

Reply 1 if you already have an appointment scheduled.

Reply 2 if you need to schedule an appointment.

1

That's great. We'll reach out to remind you when it gets closer.

21 days after discharge

Hello! Since it's been several weeks since your recent hospital stay, we wanted to check in on you and see how you are progressing. We hope you have been able to attend your pulmonary rehab appointments.
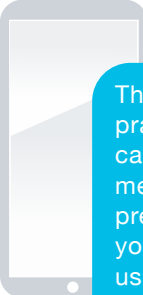
Reply 1 if you have been able to attend.

Reply 2 if you have missed visits or have been unable to attend.

2

We're sorry to hear that. We'll send a message to your care team, and someone will be in touch to discuss ways we can help.
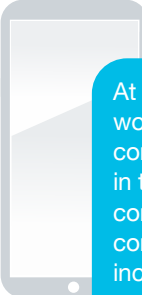
Digital Care Programs: New Mother

A welcome message

Thank you for trusting our practice with your prenatal care. We'll be sending you messages throughout your pregnancy to see how you're doing! Please let us know of any change in phone number.
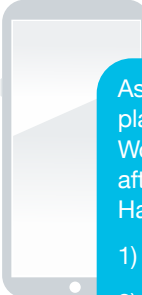
Second Trimester

At this point in pregnancy, many women experience Braxton Hicks contractions. They're common late in the day or after activity. Please contact our office if you have contractions that become regular or increase in strength.

1) I am not experiencing significant contractions at this time.

2) I am experiencing significant contractions and would like to talk to someone for advice.

1

We're glad you're doing well. Please contact us if anything changes.

Third Trimester

As delivery approaches, family planning is an important topic. Women can become pregnant quickly after birth, even when breastfeeding. Have you decided on an option?

1) Yes

2) No, but I would like additional information

1

We're glad you've made a decision. Please mention this at your next visit so we can update your chart.

Get started with [TeleVox Digital Care Programs](#) today!

Sources:

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