Steps to Ensure Patient Satisfaction

A White Paper by CureMD

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Introduction

Patient engagement has been defined as the actions individuals must take to obtain the greatest benefit from the healthcare services available to them.

Innovations in the healthcare industry have paved the way for patient engagement. With the office-based healthcare practice quickly evolving, the government is encouraging practices which use Electronic Health Records (EHRs) by providing them with incentives and penalizing the practices that do not use them.

The changing face of the healthcare industry with emerging technologies means higher costs for practices and lesser reimbursements. Care providers hence have immediately cut down their costs by retrenchment or by making cheaper investments, which ultimately has a negative impact on their overall costs since they end up compromising on care quality.

This white paper will elaborate on how Patient Satisfaction can be the best thing for you:
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1. Patient Empowerment
2. Ensuring Communication & Collaboration
3. Adoption of Patient Portals
4. Focusing on Patient Safety and Accountability
Patient Empowerment

Research confirms that the current era is going through an evolutionary transformation. This is hence being dubbed as the era of patient engagement and empowerment. Studies have shown that adults are increasingly searching the web for health related information, and ridding themselves from total dependency on healthcare providers by being more involved in their healthcare decision making process. According the survey undertaken by the 2012 National eHealth Collaborative Stakeholder Survey, a majority of Healthcare Professionals, (77%) stated that Patient Engagement is ‘very important’ and none (0%) of these professionals said that it was ‘not important’.

Patients want to be more involved and knowledgeable about their own healthcare. With the advent of modern and innovative healthcare technologies, American adults are increasingly using the web for healthcare knowledge and information that they can use to enhance their healthcare decision making process with care providers. Researchers from Manhattan have stated that the reason for this transformation is the result of convenience and accessibility in usage of technologies rather than the traditional factor of accurate information.

With patient engagement, patients are able to make educated choices while they seek care. Patient satisfaction enables patients to find out how their information is used, and how certain disclosures of their health information are made. It generally limits release of information to the minimum required for disclosure, gives patients the right to examine and obtain a copy of their own health records and empowers individuals to control certain uses and disclosures of their health information.
Ensuring Communication & Collaboration

Patient Satisfaction, to a large extent, depends upon the satisfaction of healthcare professionals, and hence, their ability to treat patients with due care. When healthcare professionals are able to deliver quality care, treat their patients successfully while being accountable for care quality, patients are more or less going to be satisfied. In an industry where a simple error can cause loss of life - stress, burden and negligence from healthcare professionals is not acceptable. This is why, it is crucial for healthcare professionals to be satisfied to ensure maximum output.

Benefits of Patient Engagement for Healthcare Professionals:

- Reduce healthcare costs due to fewer readmissions
- Reduce Emergency Department wait times
- Improve patient-satisfaction
- Reduce risky events due to better compliance
- Reduce medical malpractice costs
- Increase staff satisfaction and reduce turnover

Patient engagement and health can be greatly improved through the implementation of an effective, efficient, and open channel of two-way communication. Still, there are many practices which rely on obsolete methods. According to a recent survey of 164 practices, 100 percent used staff to call patients during office hours – a time when many people are not at home.
Poor communication with patients affects:

- Patient satisfaction
- Operational efficiency
- Risk of fraud and malpractice
- Clinical outcomes
- Physician loyalty

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3. Adoption of Patient Portals

Due to the changing face of the healthcare industry as mentioned above, there is a greater need to indulge in technologies and methods which ultimately increase patient satisfaction rates. Patient Portal is one such technology which facilitates care coordination and communication between patients and their healthcare providers. The right Patient Portal is integrated with an Electronic Health Record (EHR) solution, which means that patients have the ability to schedule appointments; request lab results and interact with their respective care providers from the comfort of their homes and without any geographical boundaries.

Research has shown that Patient Portals have a significant positive impact on patient satisfaction rates with advantages such as increases in productivity and profits, reductions in internal staff time, cost cuttings by streamlining administrative processes, and are crucial in determining and demonstrating Meaningful Use which requires the usage of Patient Portals. Recent surveys conducted by the Wall Street Journal reported that 64% of people wanted to communicate with their care providers through Electronic Health Records and Patient Portals, while at the time only 2% were using them.

**Meaningful Use Stage 1 Measure for Patient Engagement:**
In the Core Set Measures, Eligible Professionals (EPs) are to provide patients with an electronic copy of their health information upon request. This electronic copy will entail diagnostic test results, problem lists, medication lists, allergies and clinical summaries for each office visit.
The Measure states that more than 50% of all patients who request an electronic copy of their health information are provided with it in 3 business days; more than 50% of all patients who are discharged from an eligible hospital or emergency department and who request an electronic copy of their discharge instructions are given that copy at the time of discharge; and clinical summaries are provided to patients for more than 50% of all office visits within 3 business days.
Focusing on Patient Safety and Accountability

With improved communication and greater awareness, safety is always going to improve. Encouraging critical communication and teamwork, recognition is crucial to foster better relationships. For safety, recognition is another crucial factor which drives engagement. It is critical that each team member must understand what their role is in creating an ideal experience for patients and should be provided with the appropriate tools and training to support their work.

The application and security architecture should be highly secure with end-to-end encryption so that when patient data is sent across the internet, it is not intercepted by anyone other than the recipient expecting that information.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule protects the privacy of individually identifiable health information, and the confidentiality provisions of the Patient Safety Rule protect identifiable information being used to analyze patient safety events and improve patient safety.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule creates countrywide standards to protect Patient Health Information (PHI) by giving patients more control over their health information, setting limitations on the use and release of health records, devising suitable safeguards that health care providers and stakeholders must achieve to protect PHI and by holding violators accountable with civil and criminal penalties if they violate patients ‘privacy rights’.
About CureMD

CureMD is the leading provider of Cloud-based EHR, Practice Management and Medical Billing Services to transform the administrative and clinical operations of healthcare organizations of all sizes. Our award winning solutions simplify decision making, streamline operations and ensure compliance with industry standards and best practices – ultimately saving time and effort to maximize value and returns.

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