



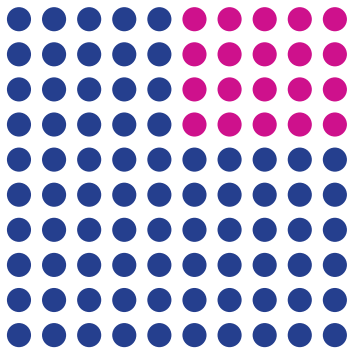
# Patient Engagement: The Next Frontier in High-Quality Healthcare

*Patient engagement is increasingly characterized by touchpoints that occur throughout the patient journey, including interactions that take place before, during and after care. Effective patient engagement results in benefits including improved clinical outcomes, lower costs to the healthcare system, enhanced focus on prevention and higher patient satisfaction. However, successful patient engagement is complex and requires reaching the right patients, at the right time, with the right messaging and feedback loops. To address these complexities and to meet increasing demands for improved clinical and financial outcomes, new models of patient engagement are emerging. One leading example is the nurse-staffed call center, including inbound and outbound patient engagement solutions. These centers have been shown to be a proven, cost-efficient method of improving the patient's journey to recovery.*

## **The Increasing Importance of Patient Engagement**

In today's healthcare environment where the focus is on accelerating value-based care models and improving care, patient engagement has taken on increased importance. There have been myriad articles, blogs, studies and educational forums dedicated to the topic, with some arguing that no other near-term initiative will have a greater impact on improving the quality of patient care and reducing healthcare costs. Indeed, patient engagement is now viewed as a key strategy to achieve the triple aim in healthcare -- optimal experience, outcomes and efficiency.

However, successful engagement is not possible without patients' willingness to participate in shared decisionmaking and, subsequently, actively participate in the ongoing management of their health. Importantly, it has been shown that a patient's overt participation and self-management can be increased through interventions that tailor support to that individual's health literacy. Research suggests that after gaining personalized knowledge, such as understanding medications and their dosages, and the importance of PCP follow-up appointments, patients are more likely to develop confidence in their ability to self-manage their health and to



20%

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**17,000,000,000**

identify and communicate health issues when they arise. The challenge to the healthcare system remains how to implement patient engagement solutions that efficiently engage and activate individual patients.

### Patient Engagement and the Bottom Line

Recent economic and political pressures, including implementation of the Affordable Care Act, have accelerated the exploration of methods to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of healthcare. Hospital readmissions, for example, result in a high burden on both healthcare systems and patients. In the US, nearly 20% of patients are readmitted within 30 days of discharge, which is associated with an estimated annual cost of 17 billion dollars. Because of these readmissions, once considered a problem largely attributable to “patient nonadherence” and other pressures, the search for cost savings and quality improvement has intensified. Patient engagement is a key component of increasing efficiencies in the end-to-end patient journey -- implemented correctly, patient engagement can increase quality and decrease costs across the care delivery spectrum, including:

- **For Patients:** better adherence and compliance, fewer no-shows, improved outcomes and better responses to marketing and outreach
- **For Providers:** better cost management, improved care utilization and increased employee satisfaction and retention

### Patient Engagement: Ambitions Vs. Realities

Increased patient engagement is a nearly universal goal for care providers, though barriers exist, according to healthcare leaders and clinicians. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents to NEJM *Catalyst's* latest Insights Council survey on patient engagement call the time investment required by health teams the biggest challenge in integrating patient engagement into care delivery. Physicians in general are often forced to see increasing numbers of patients just to maintain current practice revenues. Consequently, though increased patient engagement is viewed as a worthwhile endeavor, the practicality of conducting additional outreach is daunting – physicians are already stretched thin attempting to simultaneously care for patients, run their practices, adhere to complex programs like meaningful use and PQRS, and navigate changes like ICD-10. Given these challenges, many providers are seeking external solutions to increase patient engagement.

### RN-Based, Centralized Patient Engagement Programs: A Win-Win Solution

In the midst of the current overall healthcare transformation, where patient engagement should be viewed as a critical component to delivery system reform, specifically-trained nurses can play a crucial role. Professional nurses have a well-established tradition of engaging patients and possess interpersonal skills conducive to assisting patients with better managing self-care. Similar to physicians, though, office- and hospital-based nurses are already constrained by time and

resource limitations. Patient engagement solutions, therefore, are increasingly focused on experienced and centralized nurse-led call centers, which offer high-touch nurse interactions combined with customized, cost-efficient care management solutions.

Increasing evidence supports centralized call centers as effective, cost-efficient tools for patient engagement. Centralized discharge planning calls (DPCs), for example, have been shown to significantly increase the percentage of targeted patients reached, versus non-centralized discharge planning calls -- which in turn was shown to reduce readmissions rates. Telephonic care management has also been shown to reduce the likelihood of 60-day readmissions for select high-risk patients. Additionally, telephonic care management has been shown to encourage patient adoption of self-improvement skills, making this approach a likely catalyst for changing a patient's intrinsic motivation toward a healthier lifestyle.

Inbound and outbound call centers are an emerging methodology pairing RN-based patient engagement and cost-efficient end-to-end care management. Implemented correctly, these solutions are a win for patients, providers and payers, providing high-touch, personalized and cost-efficient patient engagement solutions from pre-care to post-discharge.

## Lacuna Health: The Leading Provider of Patient Engagement Solutions

Lacuna Health, a care management solutions company, is a leading provider of patient engagement and placement solution services. At Lacuna Health, our inbound and outbound patient engagement solutions are provided by a highly qualified and specifically-trained team of nurse advocates, each armed with the data and technology needed to engage your patients at the right time, in the right place, in the right way. Through our patient engagement services, we identify gaps in care and match patient needs to appropriate care management solutions and community resources. This proactive approach to patient engagement enables Lacuna Health to serve its customers by helping their patients maintain optimal levels of independence at home. At Lacuna, we have a deep understanding of the issues facing today's healthcare system and offer care management solutions specifically designed to leverage the proven advantages of successful patient engagement. Contact us today to learn more.

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