



DEFINING BEST IN-CLASS IN DIGITAL HEALTH ARTICLE TWO

Patients want to feel known. Do your communications touchpoints measure up?

James Stanford, Chief Marketing Officer

Executive Summary

The massive impact of COVID-19 restrictions has already forced health care to engage digitally and virtually with patients.

While many health care organizations have adapted parts of their patient-facing processes—appointment reminders, online bill pay, self-service scheduling—the overall patient experience remains fragmented.

Moving forward, those rapidly adopted tools, technology and processes may be less effective and less utilized than you want them to be in your health system. Any rushed efforts to implement new practices will likely need to be reworked to create the seamless, digital interactions today's patient demands.

At the same time, patients need to be insulated from the growing complexity of health care. Every independent interaction that a patient encounters during their health care experience has the potential to create more confusion, waste and rework for patients, clinicians and operational staff alike. And the more time your expertly trained clinicians spend on administrative tasks such as leaving voice mails, the less likely they are to fully use their expertise, which can create low job satisfaction.

This leads to several important questions:

ONE

How do you unify all touchpoints into a single experience for patients, one that's controllable by the health system?

TWO

How do you relieve staff from manual processes which may still be in place due to inertia?

THREE

How do you empower clinicians to work at the top of their licensure?

This article describes how unified patient messaging (UPM) can improve the entire patient engagement lifecycle, provides best practice insights on how to move forward with UPM tools, and shares examples of how UPM is driving improvements across the nation.

“

The ability to gain patient attention is critical to win new customers, retain existing ones, and drive the healthcare behaviors that lead to positive clinical and financial outcomes.

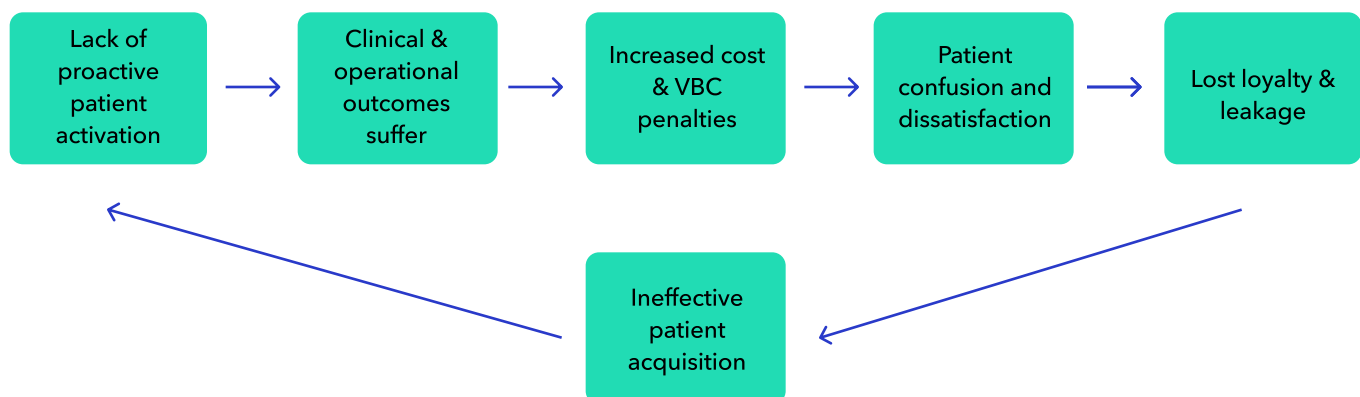
Gartner

Consumers expect retail-level experiences from their health care interactions

Patients today increasingly expect the same level of digital engagement from their health care providers as they do from every other part of their lives. As a result, they are more willing to shop for deals, disagree with their doctor and use technology to track and maintain their health, according to a 2019 Deloitte study. In fact, proactive consumers are one of the top drivers changing the health care industry right now.

Despite certain rapidly implemented digital advancements during COVID-19, health care audiences still face the frustrations of outdated experiences, where manual processes rule, scheduling and follow-ups can be subpar and patients must complete paperwork repeatedly, leading to a downward spiral of ineffective engagement.

Cycle of Ineffective Engagement



These dislocations lead to patient confusion and dissatisfaction, lost loyalty and leakage and unfruitful patient acquisition efforts. Meanwhile, competitors from inside and outside the health care establishment are racing to win market share with dissatisfied patients by integrating compelling consumer engagement tools into everything they do.

Patient messaging technologies impact the engagement cycle

When engaging with patients using the digital and mobile capabilities they prefer, patient messaging technologies can impact the entire engagement lifecycle while helping to drive patient engagement, satisfaction and retention.

Before the patient encounter	Increase utilization and reduce delays by getting patients to their encounters adequately prepared for their visit with their primary care provider or for a procedure or surgery.
Between visits	Activate patients between encounters to close care gaps and support their ability to manage their chronic conditions. The use of UPM can help support the ability to generate more encounters from existing patients, reduce available ED and urgent-care admissions and increase HEDIS scores.
After the patient encounter	Follow up with patients following discharge to ensure that recovery is progressing. This can lead to both reduced referral leaking as well as reduced 30-day readmissions).
Throughout the patient experience	For patients, caregivers and operational teams, the ability to package adjacent assets such as scheduling, education, intake/medical history, wayfinding, patient satisfaction measurement/service recovery and patient financial responsibility into a contextual care journey brings those assets to the patient right when patient needs to engage rather than forcing the patients to navigate to them. This creates an environment of improved self-service while reducing staff labor and intensity.

Ultimately, the goal with patient messaging technologies is to create operationally consistent care journeys, more personalized for every patient, so they feel known throughout the entire engagement process.

UPM tools can help solidify a new era of smooth and seamless communications with patients, helping them to feel known by their care providers on an individual level.

Unified Patient Messaging: Designed to connect with patients on their terms

As a core component of a larger patient engagement strategy, UPM combines broad outreach and personalized messaging strategies for a best-practice approach to interacting with patients on their terms and help meet their unique health needs.

Specifically, UPM technologies enable providers to create an environment of results-generating patient engagement - patient-centric, personalized and connected. Capabilities such as pre- and post-visit communications, self-scheduling, registration and check-in, patient education, family and caregiver

collaboration tools and real-time patient experience improvement are included in a robust UPM strategy. These combined UPM tools can help solidify a new era of smooth and seamless communications with patients.



Pre-Visit

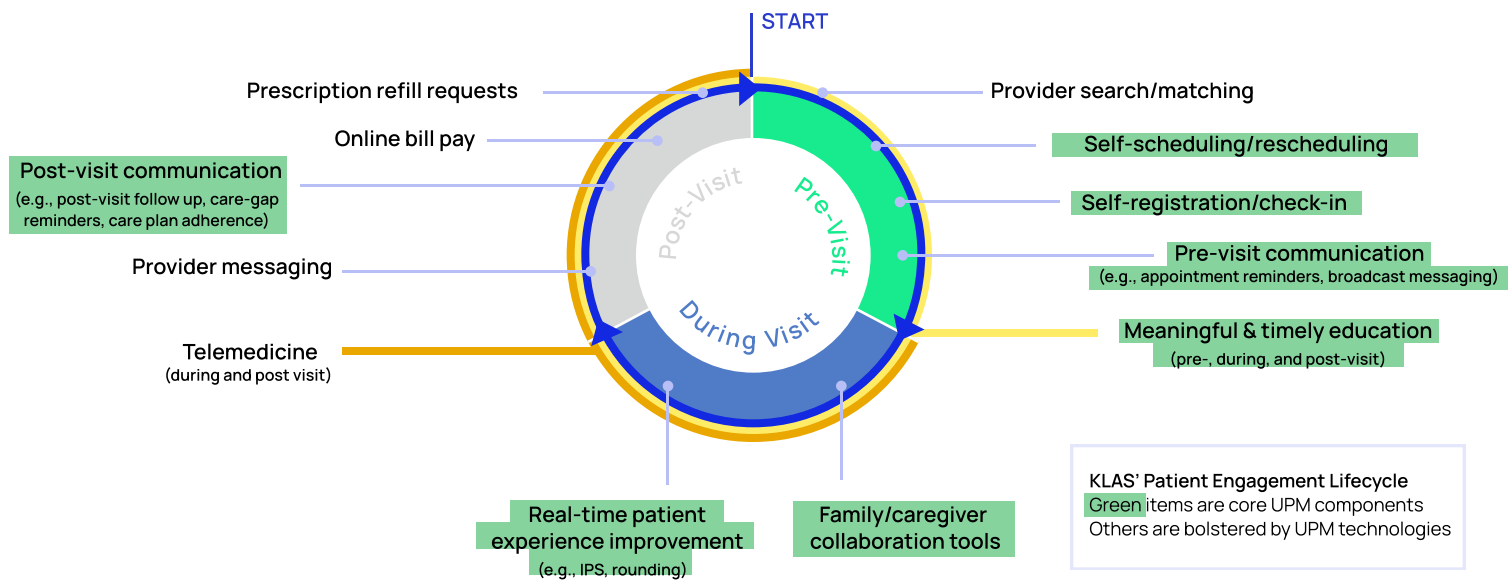
- Self-schedule or reschedule appointment
- Self-register/Check-In for appointment
- Pre-visit reminders/Messages
- Relevant patient education

During Visit

- Proactive communications/ satisfaction surveys
- Helpful tools for patient/family

Post Visit

- Post visit communication




What does a robust UPM strategy look like for patients?

Traditionally, patients either call their health care providers with questions or wait until they arrive for an appointment. Today, they text their provider for speedier answers. They can request a prescription refill from their smartphone or sign up for educational materials on a newly diagnosed condition. They receive automatic reminders to schedule a well-visit and complete a simple survey to let you know how they think their visits are. The possibilities with UPM are vast, varied and can be tailored to individual patients and populations.

What does UPM look like for health care organizations?

For health care organizations, the more convenient communication made possible by UPM can help drive numerous results with real bottom-line impact, including:

Improve clinical and financial outcomes	Decrease no-show appointments, inform patients more effectively and increase patient enrollment through targeted campaigns.
Increase resource utilization	Communicate with patients in bulk via automated outreach, automated appointment reminders and reduce readmissions.
Improve patient experiences	Follow up with patients following discharge to ensure that recovery is progressing. This can lead to both reduced referral leaking as well as reduced 30-day readmissions).



UPM providers are changing the patient engagement game with robust patient communication solutions

At Panda Health, we partner with organizations that provide robust solutions designed to meet health care organizations' unique needs. To help address today's patient engagement challenges, Panda evaluated 42 companies offering UPM solutions and selected three companies that are changing the patient engagement game with their strong UPM offerings. We are proud to feature Relatient, Upfront, and WELL on the Panda marketplace

RELATIENT is a well-established provider in the patient communications space with a large base of successful deployments of UPM capabilities. Since 2014, Relatient has helped medical providers reduce no-shows, fill the schedule, and improve patient experience and access with omnichannel communications.

UPFRONT HEALTHCARE Using advanced analytics and personalization, Upfront uniquely adapts communication channel and content to the individual, eliminating common barriers to patient engagement and ensuring patients are activated and navigated to get the care they need. With Upfront's proprietary Microsite technology, there is no application to download or login and password to remember, only a frictionless patient experience generating 40% conversion on calls-to-action and reducing outbound call center efforts by nearly 90%.

WELL™ Health enables conversations between patients and their providers through secure, multilingual (19 different languages) messaging and integrates with all EHR/EMRs. WELL Health helps 200,000+ providers facilitate more than 1.1 billion messages for 37 million patients annually. By unifying and automating disjointed communications across healthcare organizations, WELL Health reduces unnecessary provider stress and potential errors, while increasing patient visits and loyalty.

Three best practices to maximize value with UPM for achievable outcomes

To maximize improvements related to the patient experience, clinical operational efficiencies and compliance and educational opportunities to aid population health, successful leaders follow these three strategies.

1. Prioritize patient experience improvements that make the most impact.
2. Automate the more time-consuming communication processes to improve clinical operational efficiency.
3. Focus on compliance and educational opportunities to improve population health

ONE

Prioritize patient experience improvements that make the most impact.

Start with immediate opportunities when choosing which patient interactions can benefit most from seamless, digital communications. Organizations can accomplish these by focusing on the following processes:

Get the paper out of the patient visit intake process.

Patient intake can become smoother when providers can send all appropriate information, such as intake forms, to patients before their appointment and automatically remind them to complete the process if they haven't done so before their visit.

Automate appointment and waitlist workflow

Include the ability to automate appointment reminders using patient-preferred communication methods, customized with pre-appointment instructions, and allow patients to confirm, cancel or reschedule appointments quickly. Likewise, automating waitlist communications can enable providers to fill open appointment times with patients on a waitlist.

Conduct surveys to track patient perception and automate follow-up communications.

Patient surveys and perception studies continue to grow in importance for health care organizations. An integrated survey solution strategy includes requesting and reminding patients to complete online reviews and automates follow-up communications to drive engagement.

TWO

Automate the more time-consuming communication processes to improve clinical operational efficiency.

Focus on the time-intensive tasks

Using the 80-20 rule, determine which processes occupy most of the staff time and effort across administrative areas such as communications, scheduling and/or payments. Start by giving staff the ability to view historical patient communications in one place. Doing so will help them be more proactive and thorough in their interactions with patients.

Support seamless patient recall scheduling

Use automated communications for upcoming, overdue, or no-show appointments using the patients' preferred method of communication. Even better if it works in tandem with an organization's existing EHR.

One clinic was able to show a 50% reduction in no-shows when implementing patient reminders, which was also integrated with its EHR, to allow the clinic to reduce no-shows and respond to patient data quickly.

Focus on improving the patient collections process.

Simplify patient payment notices and collections processes with the ability to notify patients of their self-pay balance due, automatically and securely, before and after an appointment with payment reminders.

THREE

Focus on compliance and educational opportunities to improve population health

Consider ways that electronic communications can aid population health efforts, supporting both compliance and patient education.

Choose a UPM solution that supports population health efforts

Specifically, look for a solution to enable your health system to send automated and non-automated health and wellness campaigns for specific populations, patient education resources and general outreach campaigns using patient-preferred communication methods.

Doing so can strengthen your overall population health programs

Automated reminders and communications with patients close gaps in care, increase compliance with the care plan and improve medication adherence.

These tools can reduce missed appointments, improve engagement, and even reduce readmissions. One hospital saw readmission rates drop by a third with automated, text-first patient follow-up designed to assess and prioritize patients at risk for readmission.

Streamline patient education

Share pre- and post-visit instructions, deliver on-site discharge and wellness education, with instructions. When patients understand their care instructions, they have more opportunities to follow them correctly.

These capabilities create a more unified, efficient and effective operational approach to patient engagement, designed with the patient's convenience in mind. With a single experience for patients that is consistent, repeatable and controllable by the health system, patients will ultimately feel more known throughout their encounters.

And remember, finding opportunities to deliver small, quick wins while growing the UPM platform over time can offer a solid path to success.

Access to Best-in-Class Digital Health Partners at Speed



The Panda Health team continuously monitors the market for digital health technologies through a proven process that evaluates technology needs and then partners health care providers with the most viable capabilities.

Panda Health can help your organization find best-in-class technology that empowers your patients with UPM and creates a robust digital front door. If you are a health care organization looking to elevate and accelerate your digital strategy—or a digital health company with best-in-class technology—reach out to one of our experts.