



Patient Engagement Technology Can Foster Population Health Management

■ LAUREL STOIMENOFF, PT, CHC

Population health strategies aim to improve the quality of care for communities, not just our traditional approach of caring for the individual. Urgent care plays a crucial role by optimizing efficiency, quality, and outcomes throughout the continuum of care, while also expanding patient access.

Managing population health brings new financial risks when it comes to patient care, linking the patient experience and outcome directly to payment. In order for urgent care centers to succeed within the financial landscape of these new models of care, patient engagement will be key.

Patient Engagement Technology

Innovative technologies enable management of population health strategies by capturing, tracking, and sharing patient data. The role of urgent care providers has evolved to include developing interactive relationships among physicians, patients, ancillary caregivers, and technology beyond the exam room. Patient engagement technology can increase patient satisfaction and involvement throughout the continuum of care to improve clinical outcomes.

Among patient engagement technology's benefits:

- Improving care coordination between providers
- Leveraging the role of urgent care beyond episodic care
- Supporting informed diagnosis and treatment decisions
- Equipping patients with information to support a more active role in their healthcare management
- Reducing errors and increasing administrative efficiency

As healthcare becomes increasingly information-driven and patient-centric, it is imperative for urgent care providers to stay on the cutting edge of patient engagement technology innovations to ensure interoperability with other providers and secure fair, consistent, and predictable reimbursement rates.

With a more engaged patient population, technology can help urgent care providers gather useful information for better predictive analytics, assist in more effective interventions, and improve outcomes. Likewise, patients can utilize the technology to access information and share responsibility in their healthcare, while enjoying a more fluid experience throughout the continuum of care.

Increasing Patient Engagement

A 2016 study by CDW Healthcare found that 57% of patients and 70% of providers reported an increase in patient engagement over the previous 2 years.¹ Patients are increasing the frequency of communication with providers and accessing their healthcare information with greater ease. To make engagement technology accessible to *all* patient populations, consider each patient's unique healthcare journey. Here are some tips:

1. Understand your options and select the right technology to reach your patient population.
2. Present the technology with instructions, demonstrations, and big-picture visual communication tools to demonstrate how it works and its benefits to the patient.
3. Offer mobile-optimized technology so the patient can access information on-demand from anywhere. Access to care has been key for most urgent care centers.
4. Provide ongoing education and timely responses to patient communication.
5. Seek feedback at every opportunity to understand how best to improve the experience.

Join us at the Urgent Care Convention & Expo to learn more about the evolving role of technology in urgent care.

Reference

1. CDW Healthcare. Patient engagement perspectives key findings. February 2016. Available at: http://www.cdwnewsroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Patient-Engagement-Perspectives-Key-Findings_022316a-FINAL.pdf. Accessed March 8, 2017.



Laurel Stoimenoff, PT, CHC, is Chief Executive Officer of the Urgent Care Association of America.