



Preventing patient leakage with technology solutions

When patients visit out-of-network providers and break the continuum of care, organizations lose the ability to manage patient care, costs and outcomes.

By Rich McKeon, Vice President, Alternate Site Pharmacy Solutions, McKesson Corporation

Best practices for minimizing patient leakage across the continuum of care with technology

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Studies show that approximately 20 to 40% of patients who receive referrals never complete them, possibly because they were never scheduled, or they became no-shows due to bad appointment timing.¹

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1. Support real-time analytics

Consider the frustration felt by patients who are asked repeatedly by multiple providers for the same information. Keeping data in silos not only annoys patients, but it is a roadblock to providing optimal patient care. A *Becker's Hospital Review* article, “The importance of data-driven care management in becoming patient-centric,”² suggests that the key to greater patient engagement is to support real-time analytics, continually tracking and updating test reports, ER visits, and all healthcare services. To help minimize patient leakage, an integrated healthcare IT system can improve patient care with customizable care plans that include automated outreach mechanisms, such as calls and texts. Automated follow-up systems help avoid patient leakage and help providers track the condition of patients and share insights as required.

2. Offer same-day appointments

A Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) blog, “Expediting Access to Care with Same-Day Appointments,”³ reports that wait times across five specialties in 2017 averaged about 24 days, up from 18.5 days in 2014. When these patients feel frustrated by long wait times, it increases the odds they'll seek care outside of your healthcare system. By offering same-day appointments, your hospital or health system can dramatically decrease the odds patients will venture outside of your network to seek alternative care providers that offer greater scheduling convenience.

3. Identify high-risk patients

In an Institute for Healthcare Improvement white paper, “Care Coordination Model: Better Care at Lower Cost for People with Multiple Health and Social Needs,”⁴ researchers found that people with multiple health and social needs are high consumers of healthcare services and as a result, drivers of high medical care costs. The elevated cost of care represents an opportunity to identify these patients in order to offer services that more effectively meet their needs at a significantly lower cost than, for example, hospital emergency room services, which they typically use. A predictive modeling tool can help your hospital or health system identify high-risk patients with multiple overlapping needs for care services. These patients offer the greatest opportunity for cost savings.



Patients also miss referral visits for other reasons, such as when their medical situation resolves itself, a conflict arises, or they disagree with the referral in the first place.

Patient leakage can be minimized by using data analytics to better track referrals and follow up with patients. For example, if a healthcare system with 200 providers could avert 25% of lost referrals, it could recover nearly \$1 million in lost revenue.¹

By leveraging best practices and powerful technology, you can harness the power of data analytics and transform this challenge into your hospital pharmacy's competitive advantage.



According to recent research, an estimated 25 to 50% of referring providers do not know whether their patients have completed their referrals, and 50% of referring and specialist providers do not communicate with each other. It is imperative for healthcare providers to address these deficiencies.¹

To learn how McKesson can help your pharmacy, contact us at alternatesite@mckesson.com.

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4. Improve communication and scheduling tools

An article posted on the HFMA website, “Ensuring a High-Performing Referral Network,”⁵ suggested that a healthcare provider can minimize patient leakage by collecting simple analytics on its referrals. The article suggests simplifying scheduling and improving communication with new services, such as follow-up e-visits via telehealth solutions, in order to better explain why follow-up appointments are needed. The article also recommends using an online tool that allows the practice to view specialists’ calendars in order to make appointments on behalf of patients while they are still in your office, at the time of referral (rather than asking them to do it, which they might never do). This immediate scheduling can significantly improve referral completion rates. It can also offer data analytics to track how long it takes a patient to get an appointment and receive clinical feedback from his or her specialist.

The financial impact of losing patient referrals

An astounding one-third of patients never follow through on their doctor referral.¹ When patients don’t follow through on referrals, provider organizations lose money, but more importantly, patients face serious health consequences. As a result, there is a greater need for patient education today, for improved patient communication, and for improved technology solutions to track patients across the care continuum.

An integrated health IT system that leverages real-time data analytics and improved communication and education tactics, as well as follow-up e-visits via telehealth solutions, can improve referral rates and staff efficiency, and help track referrals. These technology solutions are key to your organization’s improved business health and can lead to overall improved patient health outcomes.



About the author:

Rich McKeon, MBA, joined McKesson in May 2004 with a leadership background in healthcare IT and medical devices. He currently serves as Vice President of the McKesson Alternate Site Pharmacy Solutions business, a multibillion-dollar segment dedicated to closed door and institutional pharmacies. In this role, he is committed to leveraging his experience and McKesson’s market-leading assets to improve the patient care continuum by developing new solutions to meet customers’ needs, and setting the strategic direction for McKesson’s Alternate Site Pharmacy business.

Sources:

- ¹ Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) blog, “The Financial Impact of Losing Patient Referrals,” July 8, 2016.
- ² *Becker’s Hospital Review*, “The importance of data-driven care management in becoming patient-centric,” Feb. 5, 2018.
- ³ Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) blog, “Expediting Access to Care with Same-Day Appointments,” July 25, 2018.
- ⁴ Institute for Healthcare Improvement Innovation Series white paper by Craig C., Eby D., and Whittington J., “Care Coordination Model: Better Care at Lower Cost for People with Multiple Health and Social Needs,” 2011.
- ⁵ Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) blog, “Ensuring a High-Performing Referral Network,” May 8, 2018.