



How to extend the reach  
of staff when driving  
patient engagement

# How to extend the reach of staff when driving patient engagement

As discussed in our previous whitepaper, “[Improving quality and outcomes](#),” patients need long-term, holistic, and convenient support between healthcare encounters in order to improve their health. But when it comes to engaging patients toward better heart health outcomes, clinical staff face a number of barriers.

It’s difficult for patients to retain everything they hear in a quick visit, as patients tend to immediately forget **40-80%** of information their care providers present to them.<sup>1</sup> To answer questions and provide support in between healthcare encounters, staff often spend more time playing telephone tag and less time on the work they do best. For cardiac rehab in particular, we have observed that some staff members spend much of their time scheduling and rescheduling appointments.

But it’s still possible for staff to increase their capacity to engage patients more efficiently and effectively outside the four walls of care delivery. In this whitepaper, we’ll explore how the right digital heart health management approach can help your organization extend the reach of staff through the following methods:

- » **Educate and reinforce guidance to more patients in less time**
- » **End time-consuming telephone tag**
- » **Ensure top-of-license practice**

## Educate and reinforce guidance to more patients in less time

In both hospital and clinic settings, cardiology staff members spend burdensome amounts of time compiling resources. These resources aim to help patients understand how to manage their heart health or learn how to prepare for or recover from a cardiac procedure and learn how to adjust to the new normal once they return home—especially considering that guidance doesn’t end when the procedure does. Ongoing management, including communication and education, is often required for these patients—whether it’s understanding medication management, risk factors, diet or more. But traditional resources often leave patients feeling overwhelmed, rather than in control of their health. As a result, staff can spend a lot of time fielding questions or underutilizing appointment time and resources because patients don’t understand or remember instructions. For instance, a cardiology team may even need to cancel a procedure because the patient hasn’t followed their pre-op instructions precisely.

When cardiology teams give patients on-demand heart health support and guidance, right from an app on their smartphone or tablet, patients can find the resources they need to manage their health one day at a time. With a digital heart health management program, patients can access daily, personalized, and interactive information that addresses procedures, conditions, and other health topics. This may include PCI, CHF, and cardiac rehab

alongside education for lifestyle barriers and changes and other chronic conditions.

For example, instead of referencing lengthy pamphlets, after-visit summaries, or post-discharge materials, a patient with CHF can take recovery one day at a time with a mobile program that gives them digestible resources on understanding their heart and CHF. They can also find information on medications, liquid intake, watching salt in their diet, activity, stress, and emotional health.

This can also help clinicians field fewer questions from misinformation patients may have found on the internet, as this approach gives patients an evidence-based, trusted resource they can turn to, when and where they need it.

## End time-consuming telephone tag

Instead of playing telephone tag, staff can increase their capacity by engaging patients where they already are: on their smartphones or tablets. Here are four capabilities that are critical to helping your staff reach the right patients at the right time:



### 1. Priority-view workflow

An effective digital heart health management approach should prioritize patients within the workflow through advanced algorithms to help staff know which patients need support, so they can apply their resources appropriately.



### 2. Two-way messaging

It’s critical to invest in solutions that facilitate secure, two-way messaging between patients and their care teams, so both patients and staff can communicate on their own time. Take patients enrolled in cardiac rehabilitation for example. Instead of trying to reschedule patients by phone call, clinical staff can generate efficiencies by responding to patient messages at set intervals so that they are not being interrupted with intermittent phone calls.



### 3. Time-saving shortcuts

Effective digital approaches also include templated messages and time-saving group actions within the clinical workflow, so clinicians can reach numerous patients in the time it takes to send a single message.



### 4. Using surveys to inform effective visits

Clinicians can improve the effectiveness of visits by collecting patient information in mobile surveys delivered alongside health information. That way, clinicians can use the visit time for counseling and planning, rather than just fact finding.

When clinicians have access to crucial capabilities like these, we’ve observed a **65%** decrease in telephonic patient communications while creating increased engagement touchpoints.<sup>2</sup>

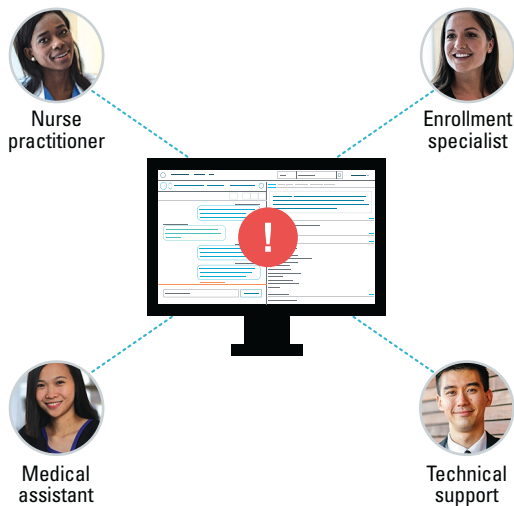
1. “Patients’ memory for medical information,” National Institutes of Health, May 2003.  
2. Wellframe analysis.

## Ensure top-of-license practice

Much of what we've discussed can help staff to work at the top of their license. But to take full advantage of the productivity a digital platform can enable, the most successful practices also organize their teams to more efficiently support and engage patients.

As we've discussed, clinicians can spend a significant portion of their time calling patients—many of whom do not answer—and completing administrative tasks in an effort to document all interactions with patients. As a result, only a fraction of their time is spent actually working with patients and providing the support they are trained to deliver.

Instead, organizations can allocate some of these functions to help each team member do the work they do best.



Digital platforms can help each staff member do their best work.

This may include a workflow that directs administrative tasks to medical assistants or non-clinical staff. While many organizations already take this approach for phone calls, this can be achieved even more efficiently with the help of a digital platform that leverages algorithms to prioritize incoming patient information and triage it to the right staff member. For instance, instead of leveraging a nurse practitioner's time to respond to non-clinical patient questions within their digital platform, your team can triage those messages to a non-clinical staff member who can help.

By task shifting other administrative work such as outreach, recruitment, enrollment, and technical support to non-clinical staff, or support staff outside your organization, a flexible team structure can help each person practice at the top of their license.

## Key takeaways

We know patients need comprehensive, long-term guidance at home in order to improve heart health outcomes. But all too often, cardiology staff simply don't have the capacity, or the right resources, to efficiently engage patients in between healthcare encounters. But with digital heart health management, cardiology organizations can apply the following methods to extend the reach of staff:

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