Redefining Patient Access

Digital care coordination is changing the face of patient engagement

Online appointment scheduling is a leading differentiator for health systems trying to improve access to care, but can scheduling software close more gaps in care, increase referral capture and drive new patient volume?

Care coordination should cross the continuum

A traditional definition of patient access focuses on creating better channels for patients to access the care they need. More proactive approaches attempt to make the process convenient for patients at every step during their healthcare journey.

The reality is, you can get most things you need online. Simple purchases like shoes, books or food are one thing. But we take for granted even complex transactions like booking flights and hotels on a daily basis.

With the advent of Uber and Lyft, getting a ride with an app on your phone is normal for many consumers. It seems like almost everything is available online. Everything, that is, except scheduling a doctor visit.

As Millennials have become the largest (and most tech-savvy) group in the US population, the ability to self-schedule appointments is quickly becoming more than a nice-to-have. But how important is it? Can it drive new patient volume or close gaps in care?

Table of Contents

Close gaps in care 5x

Population health call centers use outreach campaigns to contact patients about getting the care they need. It is an important effort to encourage wellness and adherence to care plans. To do this, agents use a combination of phone, email and text messaging to reach patients. But, in most cases, the actual scheduling of the appointment requires the patient to make an additional call to staff.

Often, the patient must remain on hold while a 3-way call is initiated, or is told to call a different number during business hours. This places unnecessary burden on the patient and as a result, prolongs the gap in care. Another problem occurs when the patient needs to reschedule this visit but is unable to through the reminder.

How can this be prevented?

If the agent has the ability to schedule directly into the referral specialist's system, 20 minute calls can be cut to 5 minutes while also decreasing the likelihood of a gap in care.

Not only is this 400% faster and more reliable for the call center, it's even easier for the patient to click a **Schedule Now** button in an email/text message – all without having to make a phone call. Call centers increase efficiency and can reach more patients. Patients can schedule on the spot. They do not have to make additional calls to get the right appointment and receive confirmation immediately to their smartphone calendar.
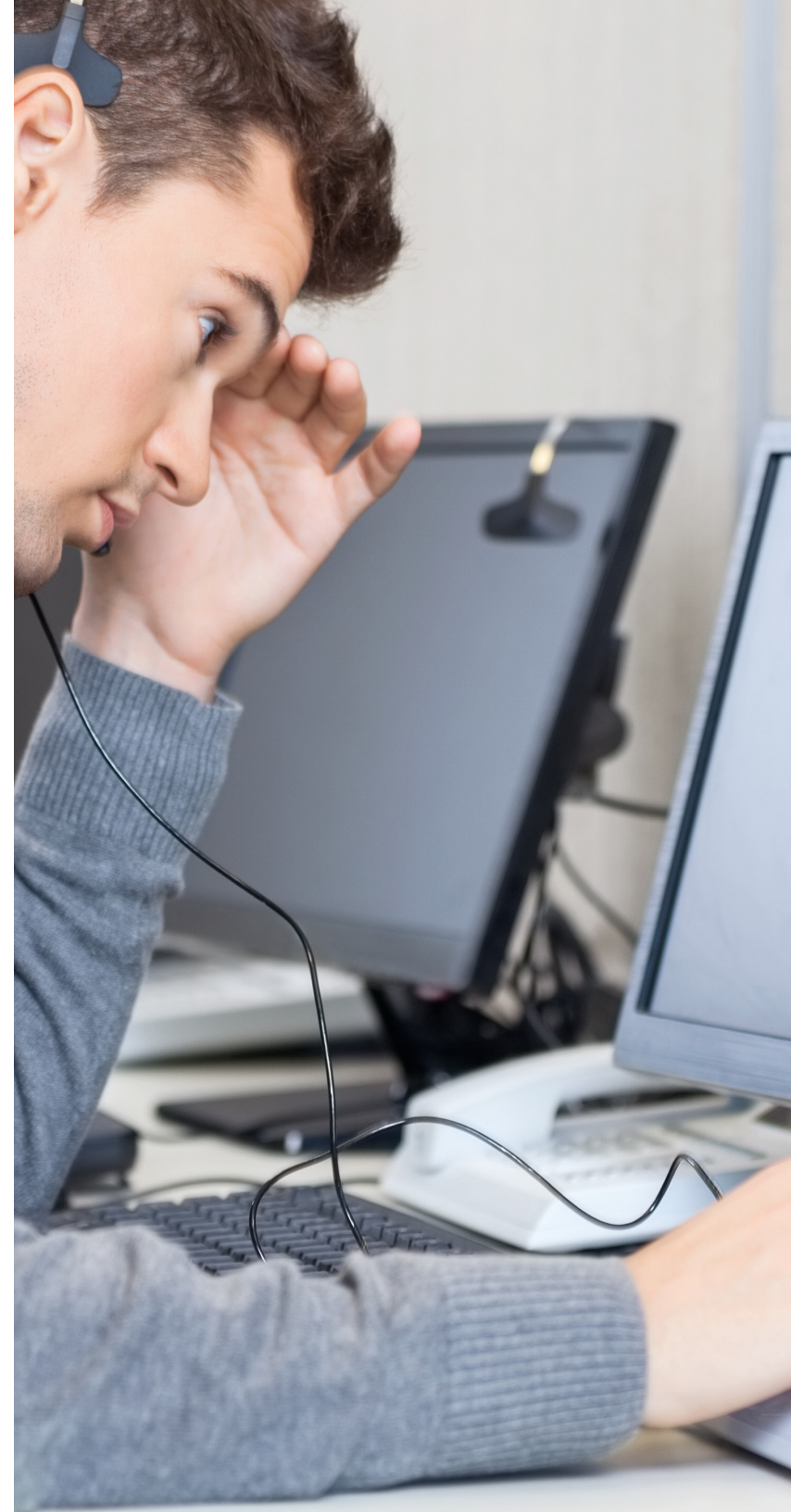
Increase referral capture

If you have ever been referred by your physician, you know that the scheduling of the referral happens later. And that is a big problem.

In fact, over one third of patients receive a referral but 20% never follow through to schedule a visit. Of the referrals that are completed – a host of other challenges often result. Sometimes it's a lack of information between the two providers but occasionally, an incorrect specialist can be prescribed. As a result, the final outcome is poor for everyone involved; patient, referrer, and target provider all suffer.

As the shift to value-based care accelerates, providers share increasing responsibility for their patients following through on referrals. What needs to change?

Providers need to be able to schedule every referral before the patient exits the facility. Providers need to know if the patient attended the appointment and if additional care is necessary. A process that combines identification of the target provider, authorizations and a confirmed appointment is needed to deliver the best outcome.

Simply giving patients a confirmed appointment at the point of care results in a 25% increase in referral capture. Tracking and engaging no-show patients drives that figure up even higher. Together, this can transform the experience into one that is easy for patients, payers and providers.

Drive new patient volume

From our experiences with several of the largest health systems and payers in the US, a digital care coordination platform for patient self-scheduling and referral coordination enables a gain of 3+ new patients per month per provider. Here's how:

It creates a new channel. New patients can be captured that otherwise would have booked elsewhere. Enabling online appointment scheduling is more than simply adding a new access point. It appeals to a younger, commercially insured demographic who want the ability to self-schedule outside of practice hours at their convenience.

It optimizes your existing inventory. By integrating all open calendar appointments into a single view, physician capacity can be optimized with surprising results. Many practices think they are at capacity and yet, only 70% of appointments are completed.

If the downstream value of a patient to a health system ranges between $1,100 and $1,500, adding 3 new patients per provider per month makes an sizeable and immediate impact to the bottom line.

Optimize with data science

Data should help you identify whether an action you've taken is working. The effectiveness of a business decision should not be left to intuition.

With the advent of user-friendly data analysis tools and an increased focus on data collection, measuring the results of an action is far easier. What if you had access to a tool with end-to-end visibility measuring your healthcare operations?

Unless you can see all your scheduling data in one place, across disparate systems, it is nearly impossible to identify opportunities to improve. But with a full view into scheduling data, it is possible to take action in the following areas:
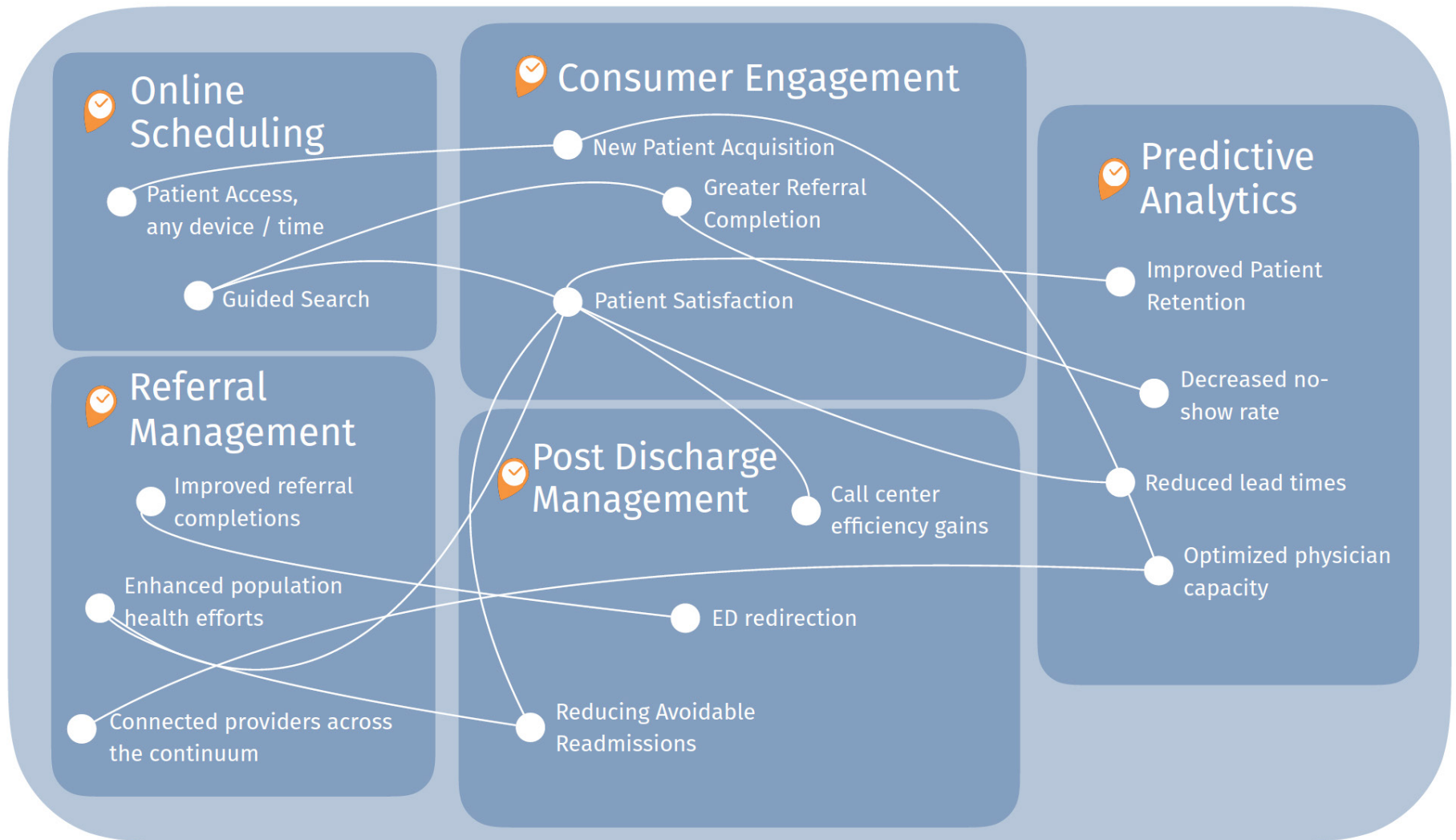
- **Change referral patterns to:**
  - Shorten lead times
  - Match patient needs with provider capabilities
  - Use higher quality/lower cost providers

- **Increase completion rates by:**
  - Proactively engaging at-risk patients
  - Engaging no-show patients in real-time

- **Drive "shared consciousness," and collaborate by:**
  - Evaluating provider adherence
  - Proactively identifying at-risk patients

"With real-time access to information that allows us to visualize trends, our referral coordinators can help ensure more timely access to care for patiens."
 - Sigal Dor, Senior Director (BMI), NurseWise

The big picture of digital care coordination

Online Scheduling
- Patient Access, any device / time
- Guided Search

Referral Management
- Improved referral completions
- Enhanced population health efforts
- Connected providers across the continuum

Consumer Engagement
- New Patient Acquisition
- Greater Referral Completion
- Patient Satisfaction

Post Discharge Management
- Call center efficiency gains
- ED redirection
- Reducing Avoidable Readmissions

Predictive Analytics
- Improved Patient Retention
- Decreased no-show rate
- Reduced lead times
- Optimized physician capacity

A user-friendly digital care coordination platform for online scheduling and referral coordination enables organizations to make healthcare delivery more convenient for everyone. It also ensures operational efficiencies can be rigorously optimized.

Conclusion

A digital care coordination solution for online scheduling and referral coordination enables more than the right appointment at the right time. It's **the** connection point that improves the patient experience, clinical outcomes and financial results. It's your bridge to better.

Key features include:

- Closing more gaps in care.

- Increasing referral capture and reducing unnecessary readmissions.

- Gaining market share through new patient acquisition.

- Driving behavior change to optimize capacity and outcomes through predictive analytics.

- Increasing patient retention and referral completion.

- Scaling population health efforts.

- Improving the patient experience by allowing patients to self-schedule care at their convenience.

In summary, new patient acquisition alone corresponds to an annual increase in profitability by $43,200 per provider in new revenue (a conservative estimate). The downstream revenue gains of those new patients and the financial benefit of managing patients' care and either closing or preventing care gaps is even greater. Streamlining care coordination and population health efforts drive significant value throughout the healthcare continuum and can be unlocked today with digital care coordination.

"Solving the complex problem of aligning the hospital discharge workflow to our scheduling process has dramatically decreased readmissions. It is a true win-win-win for the hospital, our practice and most importantly, the patients."

KYLE MATTHEWS, CEO
Cardiovascular Associates of Mesa

MyHealthDirect is the leading provider of digital care coordination solutions, partnering with healthcare organizations to improve the patient experience, clinical outcomes and financial results through online scheduling and referral coordination. With a data-driven platform and consultative services, MyHealthDirect brings payers and providers together, strengthening relations, closing gaps in care and providing insight into patient flow across networks—reducing no-shows and lead times, outmigration, use of services and readmissions. In doing so, MyHealthDirect enables healthcare organizations to improve costs, outcomes, satisfaction and quality scores and, ultimately, the bottom line.

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