



The Future of Patient Communication: How Technology is Advancing Healthcare

Streamline operations, strengthen patient relationships and reduce costs with our next-generation cloud communications platform.

Table of Contents

03

Patient Communication

04

The Way We Were

05

Meeting Today's Patients Where They Are

07

Improving Compliance with Technology

08

Looking Ahead

09

Ways to Get Ready

10

Conclusion

11

Book a Demo

The Future of Patient Communication: How Technology is Advancing Healthcare

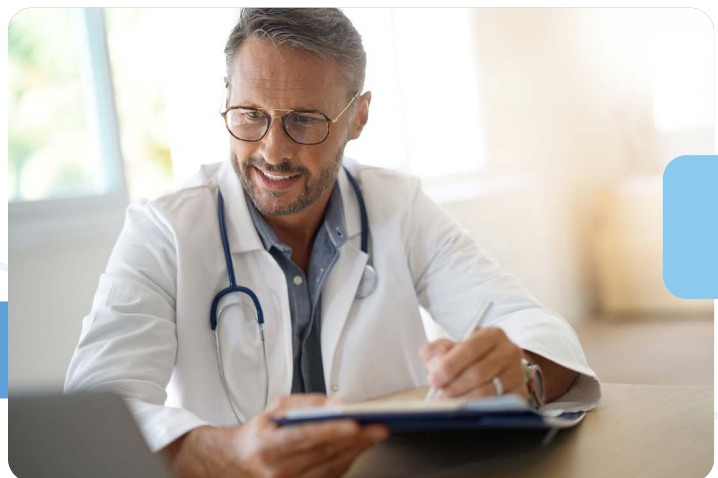
We often jump to new treatment methods, diagnostic tools, and AI's promise when considering how technological advancements have changed the healthcare landscape.

And while charting the journey from the X-ray to the MRI or from penicillin to gene therapy and beyond is fascinating, one healthcare area that has perhaps more quietly been transforming over the past two decades is patient communication.

In an industry with such high human stakes, it is sometimes surprising that we don't always give full attention to how we share information with patients,

especially when misunderstandings can have such profound personal and financial results. For example, when a leading medical professional liability insurer reviewed more than 20,000 malpractice cases, they found that communication failures were identified as a key contributing factor more than 30 percent of the time. Even for more routine matters, this information gap can be a missed opportunity because we can improve our efficiency, engagement, and patient outcomes by looking more closely at how we communicate with patients.

First, though, let's look back at where we started.



The Way We Were



We all know the old model, where a patient had to navigate a medical office's specific phone numbers, extensions, series of holds and voicemails just to set up appointments and share information. Then they usually had to go through the process in reverse - or even come to the office in person - to get vital information like test results, diagnoses, recommendations, prescriptions and next steps.

Paper patient records and faxing also meant information could get lost or misplaced. Providers and patients would often have to wait for key information to be faxed and reach them and then have to confirm that they received it. Not to mention the challenge of getting the timing right to connect with a doctor or busy medical office representative over the phone

or making time for a face-to-face meeting to ensure privacy and confidentiality when discussing patient case details.

While this sounds like the past tense, there are still more than a few offices operating this way today. And these inefficiencies can significantly affect the quality of care. For example, in a more basic scenario, a patient may have to wait a few extra days to learn that they should come in for a follow-up or additional tests; in more serious cases, key information about a patient or case might not get relayed by a referring physician due to these inefficiencies in communication, causing an unnecessary adverse outcome for a patient's health.

“**Even offices with modernized operations to include Electronic Health Records (EHRs) or dedicated patient portals may want to look at additional ways to utilize technology to create a more seamless and convenient patient experience. Particularly considering what patients today expect.**”

Meeting Today's Patients Where They Are

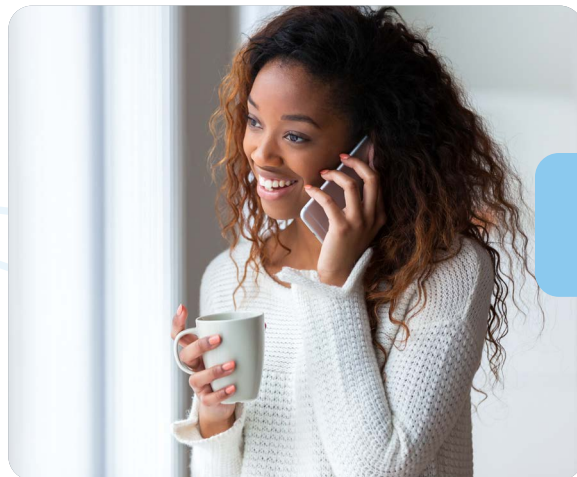


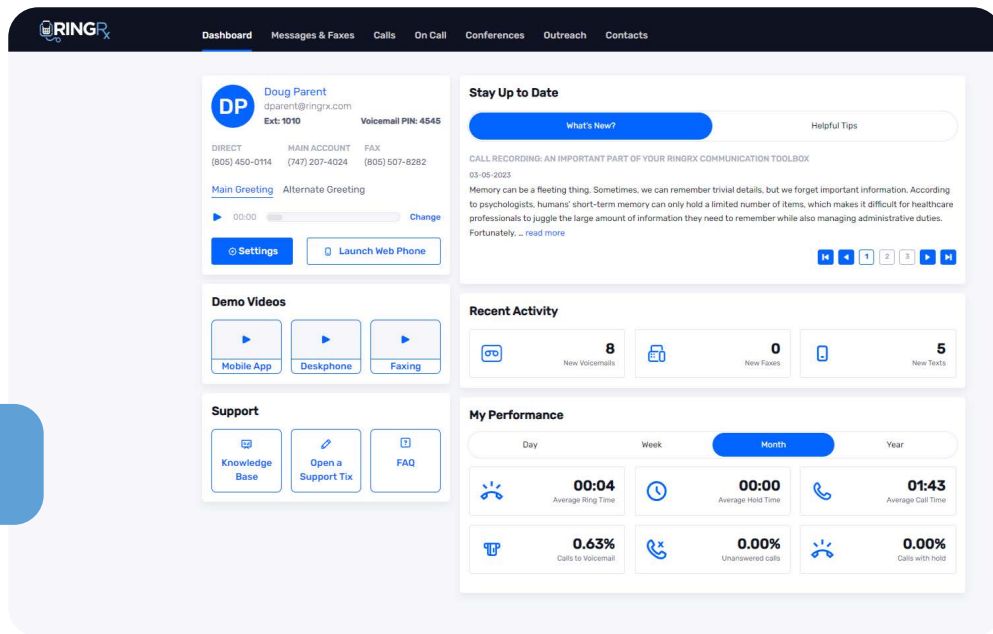
Today's typical patient vastly differs from their predecessor 20 or even ten years ago. They have much higher expectations of their healthcare service providers, borne out of having smartphones and immediate access to unlimited information front and center in their lives.

In addition to this flood of information, patients also have experienced firsthand how healthcare providers were able to develop and implement many different remote services during the pandemic. Taken together, we now have a generation of patients who expect instant access, deep detail and remote services on par with what they used to get face-to-face.

For providers, that means patients are looking for the same convenience in setting up appointments, reaching staff and getting responses than they have in their financial transactions and interactions with friends. This contrast becomes stark when healthcare services can't keep pace with many other routine aspects of their lives.

Patients want more informed conversations and interactions, whatever the medium. The vast majority of patients enter an interaction or appointment armed with a wealth of information about symptoms, conditions, treatments, outcomes, side effects and more, and they expect to start their conversations with medical professionals at a higher and more equitable level than in the past.





And all of this has to be available remotely. While patients value privacy and generally understand the need for regulation, as the pandemic has shown us, these considerations should be accommodated, not immovable roadblocks. So if someone can get COVID test results or recovery-specific data on their phone, they will certainly wonder why they can't get other medical records and information similarly.

To serve these changing needs, healthcare providers have new options. For example, many offices have benefited from texting capabilities, allowing patients to communicate securely and in a HIPAA-compliant way. This can be useful for patients with questions or concerns who may not need to schedule an appointment or speak directly with their provider. In addition, it can help streamline office communications.

Additionally, a virtual receptionist feature can allow patients to easily connect with the appropriate person or department in medical practice. It can offer personalized greetings, menu options, and call routing, which can help reduce wait times and provide more information through recorded messages and options.

Some providers also create secure patient portals to allow patients to access their medical records from home and mobile devices. These portals can share key information, medication instructions and even treatment and appointment reminders. They also allow providers to give deeper detail and context to a patient's case, much as a face-to-face appointment would.

Improving Compliance with Technology



While patients may directly compare the convenience of their healthcare services to other aspects of their lives like chat, email and e-commerce, the truth is that the healthcare industry has many more privacy and security requirements than even the financial and banking sector.



Many consumers are probably familiar with HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), which limits how healthcare entities can share patient information. HIPAA also guides how personally identifiable information (PII) can be used, including electronic personal health information (ePHI).

In short, HIPAA provides a framework for handling patient information that the industry must follow. Now that so much of our healthcare information is communicated electronically, providers must ensure that any technological solutions they employ are HIPAA compliant. In addition, providers need to verify who has access to which information and when, and that task becomes much more difficult when combining paper and electronic records.

Providers must ensure patient data security and interoperability with existing systems to make it

all work together. With this also comes the role of openly and clearly communicating to patients about how their data is being used and stored so they know the steps to protect their PII.

All chat, email, social media, portals and EHR access needs to comply with these regulations. Therefore, medical offices must verify with third-party providers that they are HIPAA compliant and have built-in processes to accommodate all the industry requirements for protecting PII and ePHI.

This also applies to voice calls. In fact, a number of offices today use digital call recordings to ensure that all patient interactions are properly documented and can be reviewed as needed. More than just checking the boxes for HIPAA compliance, this practice can also help reduce the risk of miscommunication or misunderstandings and ensure that patients receive the best possible care.

Looking Ahead



While technology has undoubtedly reshaped much of how medical providers interact with patients, a number of additional solutions and services are becoming more commonplace. As higher bandwidth technologies continue to grow and blossom, so will their healthcare applications.

Exhibit A is advanced call routing: These systems allow healthcare organizations to manage incoming calls efficiently. They enable customizable call routing based on various criteria, such as time of day, caller ID, and call volume. This ensures that calls are directed to the appropriate department or staff member, minimizing wait times and improving the overall patient experience.

Automated reminders are also quickly becoming the norm. They can help reduce the number of missed appointments or follow-up actions by sending patients timely messages via phone, text or email. This also can help improve patient compliance and ensure patients get the care they need at the right times.



Finally, there's no need to rely on inefficient and error-prone traditional answering services. Sophisticated on-call platforms ensure calls are routed to the right provider on the right device. They deliver the best after-hours patient experience while minimizing the on-call burden for staff. Healthcare organizations can increase office efficiency by empowering each on-call provider to set their profile and preferences, ensuring calls are managed correctly and reducing administration headaches and patient delays.

Ways Your Organization Can Get Ready



There are a lot of new solutions out there, and every office has specific needs for its patient and service base.

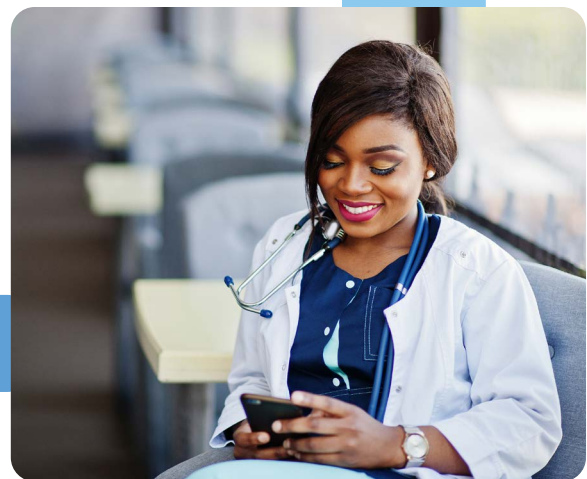
As a result, there is probably no one-size-fits-all answer for every provider; however, you can still do several key things to determine the next steps.

First, look at some patient communications activities that take up the most time in your practice. Is it scheduling, maintaining and sharing records, patient follow-ups or connecting with third parties and referrals? Next, see if adding automation or streamlining your processes will reduce time spent on these administrative tasks, allowing your team to focus more directly on patient care.

Second, look at your communication pain points. Do records fall through the gaps? Do you have too many missed, lost or hung-up calls or overly long hold times? Is your voicemail box full and unable to take new messages? Some of these solutions can reduce headaches on your end.

Finally, talk to your patients about their experience. Ask what they like about your service and what they wish could be improved. Ask what additional services they'd like to see provided.

In the end, you will likely uncover some opportunities to improve your practice, and you can then focus on the changes that will bring the most value to you and your patients.



Conclusion



The healthcare landscape is constantly changing quickly, and that's not even counting how quickly communications technology continues to evolve.

By combining both worlds, we see patient interaction rise to the next level.

While it may seem challenging to keep up, many easy-to-implement options can quickly make a significant difference in your patient experience, business



operations and patient outcomes. Even small steps can yield major results, whether it's just better organizing your phone lines or setting up dedicated patient portals and texting.

So please get in touch to learn more about how RingRx can help your office better serve patients now and in the future!



Book a Demo today!

To learn more about RingRx and if it fits your organization, [book a demo](#) or contact us at (888) 980-6860 and request a free trial.





888-980-6860



info@ringrx.com



114 E Haley Street, Suite L, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

www.RingRx.com