



10 Ways to Fulfill Patients' Communication Wish List

How Healthcare Teams Can Deliver Communications That Meet Patients' Expectations

Patients expect a lot from their healthcare providers. Though healthcare teams strive to grant all of their patients' wishes, some requests are more reasonable and easier to meet than others. For example, providers may not be able to magically fulfill their patients' desire to lose weight without lifestyle improvements, but they can grant communication-focused wishes. West surveyed patients and providers to understand what patients expect in terms of communication and how providers can meet those expectations. The findings revealed patients expect providers to communicate more effectively about prevention, disease management and billing.

The Patient Communication Wish List

10 Communications Patients Want Healthcare Providers to Deliver

Patients wish for communications centered around **prevention, disease management** and **billing transparency**.

Wishes for

Routine & Preventive Outreach

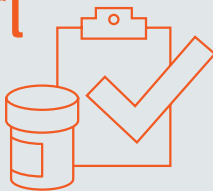


Patients expect providers to communicate about routine healthcare and prevention by:

- 77% Helping patients track lab results.
- 71% Making recommendations about or scheduling preventive tests and screenings.
- 60% Texting patients or participating in online chats between appointments.
- 57% Sending automated text, voice or email reminders to urge patients to take actions like scheduling appointments or taking medications.

Wishes for

Disease Management Support



Patients say it's very important for providers to communicate about chronic disease management by:

- 78% Making personalized recommendations based on information that is specific to a patient's individual needs.
- 76% Helping patients understand their current and target health metrics.
- 64% Sending medication refill and pick-up reminders.
- 53% Delivering online surveys or check-ins to help monitor diseases, identify health risks and manage chronic conditions.

Wishes for

Financial Communication



Patients want healthcare providers to clearly define and help them manage financial responsibilities by:

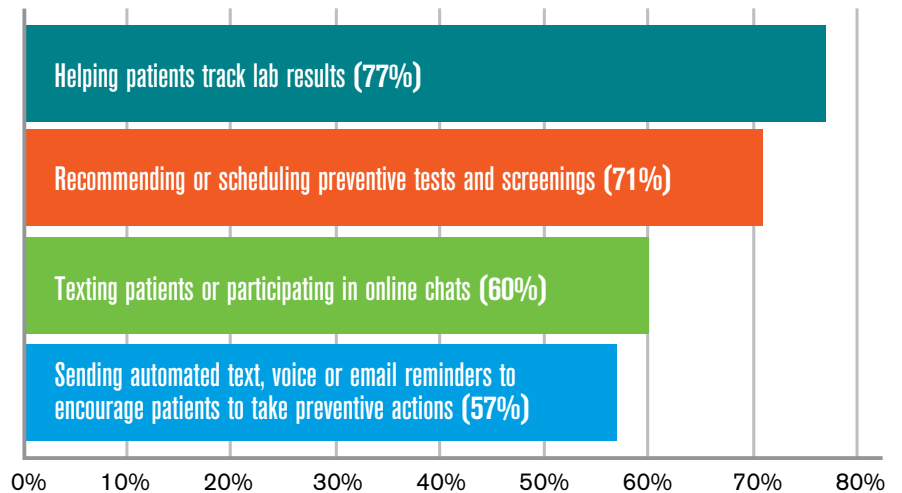
- 80% Communicating with patients about what insurance covers vs. what they owe.
- 76% Giving patients an easy way to pay or understand medical bills.

Fulfilling Patients' Communication Wishes

Providers can give patients the communications they wish for by employing the same patient engagement technology they currently use for appointment reminders.

Patients wish their healthcare providers would proactively communicate between appointments to encourage prevention and promote routine health management. They say it is extremely or very important for providers to do so by helping patients track lab results (77%), recommending or scheduling preventive tests and screenings (71%), texting patients or participating in online chats (60%), and sending automated text, voice or email reminders to encourage patients to take preventive actions (57%).

Patient Wishes for Healthcare Providers



How can healthcare providers grant these wishes?

Here are several strategies healthcare teams can implement to grant these prevention-focused patient wishes.

1 Communicate the status of lab results

Patients may experience anxiety, worry or fear when waiting for lab results. Not knowing when to expect results or how to get them can make waiting worse, so patients want providers to follow up and proactively communicate information about lab results. Healthcare providers agree; 91 percent of providers say it is very or extremely important to communicate with patients about lab results. Providers can leverage the patient engagement technology they are using to send appointment reminders to deliver automated messages that update patients about the progress of their lab tests. They can also send patients notifications to let them know when their results are available and how to retrieve them.

2 Make preventive care recommendations

Patients often don't know what screenings they need or when they are due for preventive exams. More than one in three patients (36%) say their healthcare providers do a fair or poor job of proactively recommending preventive screenings, or they do not make any recommendations for preventive services. Healthcare teams can easily send automated messages to alert patients when they are due for an annual exam or let them know their provider suggests a preventive screening, such as a mammogram or colorectal cancer screening.

3 Engage in text exchanges

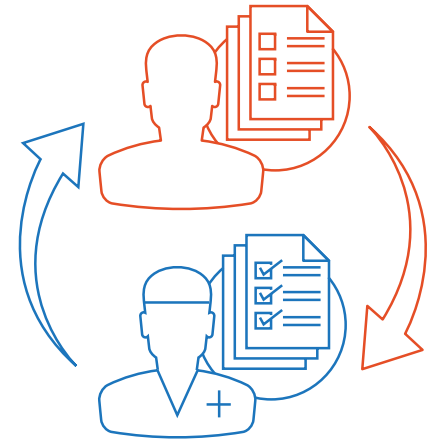
Not only do patients want to communicate with providers between visits, they want the option to do so in ways that are most convenient to them—by texting, for example. Americans are twice as likely to want their healthcare providers to text them compared to seven years ago, and yet 24 percent of patients say their providers do not do this. Providers can use their patient engagement technology to schedule and deliver mass text messages to specific patient populations about routine care and prevention or, if warranted, initiate text chats with individual patients.

4 Deliver automated health management prompts

Although Americans want healthcare providers to send automated communications—such as text messages, voicemails or email reminders—to encourage them to take specific preventive actions, 21 percent of patients say their providers are not doing this. Healthcare teams can easily use their patient engagement technology to communicate and urge patients to schedule appointments, exercise for 30 minutes, take prescribed medications as directed or perform other actions to maintain their health.

What do patients wish for?

Patients wish their healthcare team would deliver continuous disease management support. Patients say it is extremely or very important for providers to support chronic disease management by giving them personalized recommendations based on their specific needs (78%), helping them understand their current and target health metrics (76%), sending medication refill and pickup reminders (64%) and delivering online surveys or check-ins to monitor diseases, identify health risks and manage chronic conditions (53%).



How can healthcare providers grant these wishes?

Here are strategies healthcare teams can implement to grant these patient wishes centered around disease management.

5 Personalize chronic care recommendations

Patients with chronic illnesses want health management recommendations targeted to their conditions, rather than generic information from providers. Seventy-nine percent of Americans with chronic health conditions say it's extremely or very important for their healthcare provider to give individualized, patient-specific recommendations. Nearly all healthcare providers (95%) agree. Healthcare teams can leverage their patient engagement technology to easily deliver disease-specific recommendations on a one-to-many basis. For example, providers can send messages to all individuals within their patient population who have diabetes. These messages might include information on how to control blood sugar through diet and exercise or reminders to schedule foot and eye exams.

6 Educate patients about health metrics and goals

Patients with chronic conditions can better manage their health if they know their current and target health metrics. However, more than one in three patients with chronic conditions (36%) say their healthcare providers either do a fair or poor job communicating about health metrics, or they do not do it at all. Healthcare teams can send messages to help educate chronic patients about health goals. For example, automated communications that clarify blood pressure targets and give tips for lowering blood pressure can be helpful for patients with chronic conditions who may have a poor understanding of blood pressure guidelines.

7 Send medication reminders

For many chronic patients, medication is part of health management. To encourage medication adherence, healthcare teams can send automated reminders that prompt patients to refill, pick up or take their medications. Healthcare teams can also text or email patients links to online surveys inviting them to answer questions about medication adherence, pain levels and other symptoms. Providers can use this data to identify patients who are experiencing side effects or issues with their medications.

8 Monitor patient health with survey check-ins

Chronic patients want providers to proactively monitor their health and alert them if there are issues. Providers can monitor chronic conditions and communicate concerns to patients by utilizing survey check-ins. To do this, healthcare teams can send messages with instructions and a link to complete an online survey. Based on patients' responses to the check-in questions, providers can follow up with additional messages for improved chronic disease management. If a patient's self-reported data indicates that the person's health is at risk, the patient's case can automatically be escalated so staff can intervene before serious problems arise.

BILLING TRANSPARENCY

What do patients wish for?

Patients wish providers would help them understand medical bills and make paying bills easier. Seventy-six percent of Americans say it is extremely or very important for providers to give patients an easy way to understand and pay their medical bills. Additionally, eight in ten Americans (80%) say it is extremely or very important for their healthcare provider to help them understand what is covered by insurance and how much they are responsible for paying. Yet, 45 percent of patients report that the healthcare providers they visit either do not do this or they do a fair or poor job communicating about insurance coverage and payment responsibilities.

How can healthcare providers grant these wishes?

Healthcare teams can implement the following strategies to grant patient wishes focused on billing transparency.



35% of healthcare providers rate their organization poorly for helping patients understand out-of-pocket expenses and what is covered by insurance.

9 Communicate about what insurance covers vs. what patients owe

More than one-third (35%) of healthcare providers rate their organization poorly for helping patients understand out-of-pocket expenses and what is covered by insurance. One way providers can improve communication is to send automated messages 24 to 48 hours prior to appointments to alert patients of insurance-mandated copayments ahead of arrival.

10 Help patients understand and pay medical bills

Even before patients receive bills, healthcare teams can begin communicating with them about costs to reduce confusion and encourage on-time payments. Providers can follow up with patients after appointments to let them know what services they will be billed for, when to expect a bill and even who the bill will come from. Healthcare providers can also send simple text, email or voice messages to remind patients of upcoming payment due dates. Then, when necessary, organizations can send automated messages to patients who have missed payment deadlines and include a call-to-action, as well as a convenient way for individuals to make a payment.

It is now easier than ever for healthcare teams to grant patients' communication wishes. Patients have articulated how they want and expect their healthcare providers to communicate. Now it is up to providers to listen and respond. In most cases, providers already have technology in place that allows for the delivery of strategic between-visit communications. When providers use their existing technology to create and send communications that support routine care and prevention, disease management and billing transparency, they can fulfill patients' expectations and help create better healthcare interactions.