

# How to Use Digital Health Programs to Future-Proof Your Hospital System

The global pandemic has erected barriers between patients and providers. Digital programs that bring the two back together—even when they're physically apart—are destined to become the long-term standard of care, even after social-distancing measures are eliminated.

But this digital transformation of healthcare isn't just a pipe dream for the future—it's here now.

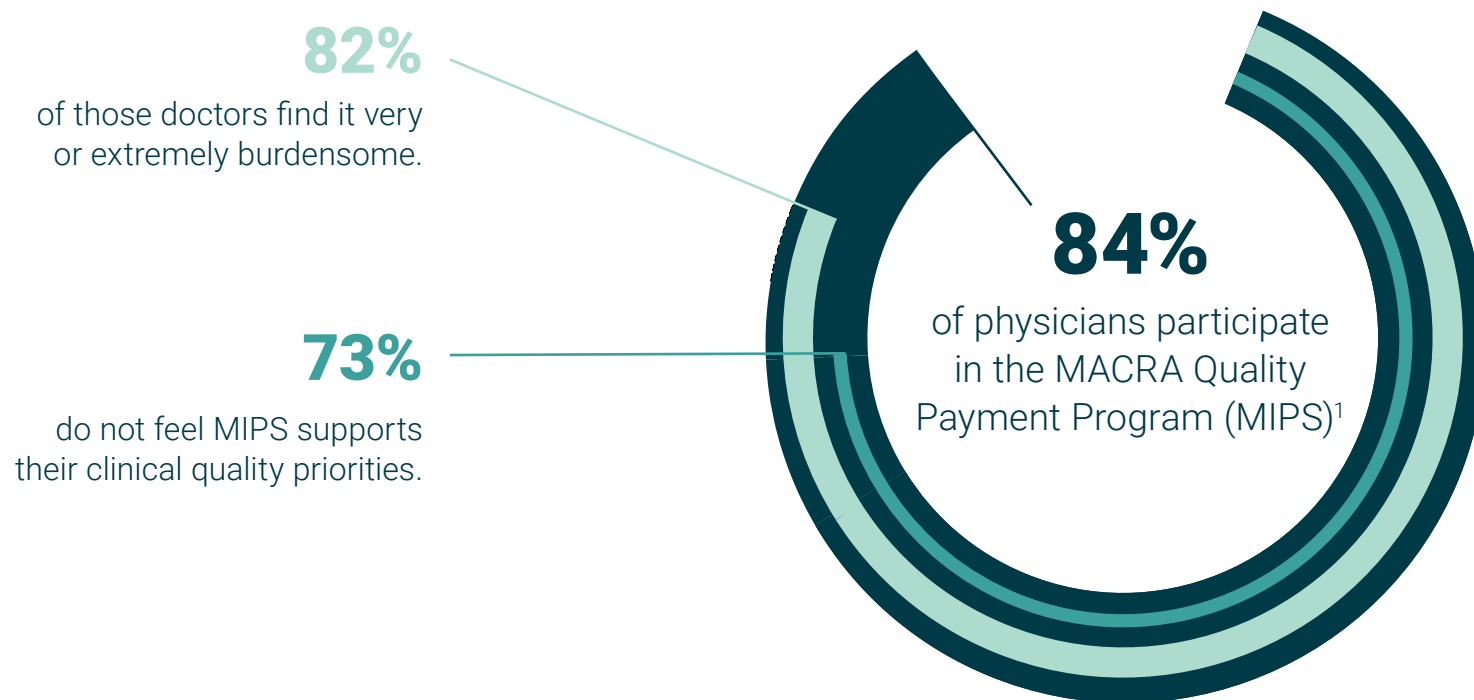


# Bridging the Gap Between Patients and Physicians



The current U.S. healthcare model prioritizes performance measures that don't always reflect the quality of clinicians' work or the best interests of patients. Healthcare professionals are so burdened by these reporting requirements that they're burning out in record numbers and finding themselves further removed than ever from the patients they treat.

So much time and effort go into understanding complicated Medicare requirements, manually inputting data, and producing on-paper “results” that **clinicians now know less about their patients than they would have 50 or 100 years ago.**



This move away from patient-centered care has been a concern for years, but the dangers of that move have now come to a head and can no longer be ignored.

The COVID-19 pandemic has stressed the resources of every hospital system in the U.S. In fact, it's now the third leading cause of death in America.<sup>2</sup>

- + The lethal combination of too few healthcare resources and too many patients with coronavirus has contributed to the number of deaths and serious complications from the disease.
- + Hospital systems unprepared to use telehealth and other digital tools have scrambled to find digital solutions during the emergency.
- + Patients are leaving their current doctor's offices in favor of ones equipped with the digital tools needed to treat them outside the office setting.



During any emergency, patients must be triaged so the most critical ones can be treated first.

## **But what happens to the non-emergent patients?**

Since most of your patients are either non-emergent or may present with symptoms that aren't recognized as urgent (e.g., no signs of coronavirus), this is an important question to consider.

When resources are stretched too thin, your non-emergent patients can fall through the cracks.

Think back over the past year and the patients you couldn't follow up with because you didn't have the tools to engage with them outside of the office.



Did pregnant patients keep all their prenatal appointments?



Are your patients with diabetes managing their condition at home?



Have all your cancelled colonoscopy appointments been rescheduled?

If the answer to these questions or others like them is no, you've lost a considerable amount of money. And so many opportunities for positive health outcomes were missed as well.

It's time to invest in digital tools that will help you weather this storm and be prepared for the next one.



# Successful Patient Outcomes Start Outside the Office

*Wait a minute. You just said part of the problem was a lack of patient-centered healthcare. Won't digital automation turn me into a robot and push me farther away from my patients?*



It may sound counterintuitive, but the right platform that includes the ability to automatically schedule patient education can **close** the gap between you and your patients.

Physicians spend **49%** of their time on EHR and desk work and just **27%** of their time face-to-face with patients.<sup>3</sup>

A huge chunk of your time is spent on tasks that could be automated—not so you can avoid patients, but so you can reach them in more meaningful ways.



When seeing patients in person isn't possible, connecting with them regularly at home can make a huge difference in their care. And now that patients have become more experienced with remote or virtual options, there's no putting the genie back in the bottle—people are going to expect these options to remain available in the future.

## Personalized Care vs. Push Notifications

Digital health programs are so much more than simple appointment reminders or group emails. They send information tailored to a patient's journey, right when they need it.

- + Videos that teach patients how to test their blood sugar
- + Graphics showing baby's progress during each trimester
- + Post-op instructions after coronary intervention
- + Tips on what to do after COVID-19 exposure
- + Prep instructions before a colonoscopy



# Do More With Less

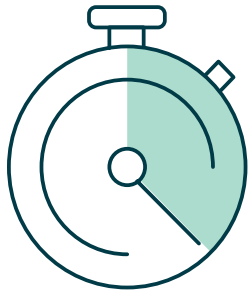
Save time, money, and resources throughout your healthcare system



Too often, a lack of time, money, or personnel can keep clinicians from giving patients the attention they'd like to. With an automated digital health program, you can care for more patients using your current resources.

- Automation helps you triage cases so you can identify and intervene with high-risk patients.
- Meanwhile, low-risk patients are followed up with automatically, keeping them from falling through the cracks.

A digital health suite also provides standardized content that's been medically reviewed, edited, and designed. Instead of wasting time reinventing the wheel each time you need an article, graphic, or video, you're provided with ready-made, user-tested content.



Imagine how much time could be saved if your staff could spend less time on:

- + Delivery of patient education.
- + Assessments to gauge the patient's understanding of the information they were given.
- + Surveys to evaluate patient satisfaction.

Scheduled reminders and patient education delivery ensure each patient has the information they need at their fingertips, right when they need it, and lets them educate themselves on their condition or procedure.

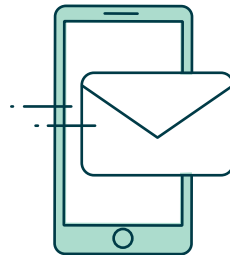
Reminders are a great way to encourage patients to perform self-care tasks, such as recording their blood pressure, preparing for an upcoming procedure, checking blood sugar, or doing rehabilitation exercises. Helping people manage conditions at home or arrive ready for surgeries will improve their health outcomes.



## Reduce Cancellations and Readmissions

Educated, prepared patients mean fewer unnecessary calls, in-office visits, readmissions, and cancellations. Day after day, your appointment calendar is filled with patients you can help because they show up ready to go.

Blocks of downtime caused by cancellations and unprepared patients—time that you're not making money or helping anyone—are minimized.



Because automated messaging uses fewer resources and never forgets about a patient, every single person gets the care they need and deserve.

## Increase Revenue Without Increasing Spending

Because each digital interaction is tracked, your healthcare system gathers valuable patient data along the way. This allows for better communication between patients and providers, giving your team better insights into what patients are doing and what they need.

Being able to track how people use the health information in the digital program is key to early intervention. You'll be able to view their biometrics, see how often they exercise, or find out whether they're keeping up with their post-op rehab between appointments.

Your organization can even harvest that data to conduct quality improvement projects.



**Quality  
improvement  
project**



**better  
outcomes**



**greater patient  
satisfaction**



**higher revenue  
from HCAHPS**

# Your Health System's Bread and Butter: Keeping Existing Patients



Traditionally, marketing to recruit new patients was thought to be the best way to increase revenue, but times have changed.

You face competition from other hospital systems that are better prepared to reach people remotely, and nontraditional healthcare businesses are also now vying for your patients.



Attracting one new patient **costs 5x more** than retaining one current patient.<sup>4</sup>



During health crises, such as COVID-19, patient retention is the most important thing you can do to ensure a steady revenue stream. Money from elective procedures is down. Fewer patients are coming into your office. Your existing patients are your bread and butter, and keeping them has never been more important.

Increasing retention by just **5%** increases profits by **25%** or more.<sup>5</sup>



A digital health program creates an ongoing connection with patients and assures people you haven't forgotten about them, even though they're not in your office as often.

Used in conjunction with telehealth services, a digital health program can help you cultivate relationships just as well as if you were meeting face-to-face regularly.

Most importantly, reaching out to patients with reminders and helpful education improves customer loyalty, making you the trusted go-to source for information.

People are less likely to use questionable sources like "Dr. Google" when making their health decisions, and they know they can come to you the next time they need help.

**Patients who trust you and your information come back again and again—and they tell friends and family about you as well.**



# Positive Outcomes for Every Patient



You can't have positive patient outcomes if you don't have the resources to reach patients in the first place. Automation isn't just about doing more—it's about doing more right.





## Targeted Patient Interventions

Prioritizing patients and identifying their needs as quickly as possible is the first step toward helping them. Tracking people through an automated program can help you do this.

Let's say you have two patients enrolled in a digital health program for diabetes. You can see that Patient A is reading all the education you send, showing up for all their appointments, and logging data that shows they're adhering to their recommended self-management plan (e.g., losing weight and exercising daily). However, Patient B hasn't opened many of the emails you sent, they've missed several appointments, and their weight is increasing.

	Patient A	Patient B
Opening email	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logging data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Following self-management plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeping appointments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This data shows that an automated self-management approach is working for Patient A but not for Patient B. You now know who you need to bring into the office or intervene with more closely.

### TIME SPENT ON EACH PATIENT

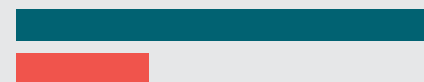
Without automated programs



With automated programs



Patient A



Patient B



## Better Post-Op Outcomes

Studies show that people forget 50% of what they heard during a clinician appointment.<sup>6</sup> Many health professionals use terms that are unfamiliar to patients or speak rapidly in order to get to the next appointment, which makes retaining information even more difficult for patients.



**6 out of 10** doctors say they don't have enough time to treat patients effectively or answer their questions.<sup>7</sup>

By sending patient education automatically via email or your portal, patients can read or watch videos in the comfort of their own home, at their own pace, improving their ability to retain the information.

These patients who better understand their care are less likely to have post-op complications or in-hospital safety incidents. They and their caregivers are also better prepared to manage their care when they get home, reducing readmissions and improving health outcomes.

## Improved Patient Satisfaction

People want to be involved with their care. Giving them the tools they need results in more satisfied patients.



Multimedia content, such as videos and graphics, increases the likelihood that patients will use the material.



Engaging, plain-language health education helps patients better understand their condition.



Regular check-ins make patients feel like a valuable partner in their healthcare.

Patient satisfaction is a huge boost to your bottom line: You'll receive more reimbursement from better HCAHPS scores, your patients will keep coming back, and they'll spread the word about you throughout their community.

Patient satisfaction influences **more than half** of the questions on an HCAHPS survey.<sup>8</sup>



As the healthcare industry shifts from inpatient to outpatient, you must find new ways to deliver cost-effective, quality care. A digital health program lets you develop the right strategy by service line for your specialties and population.

**Choose a solution that offers the range of specialties and content suites you'll use, depending on your hospital system's needs.**



Some specialties, conditions, and procedures lend themselves particularly well to a digital health program.



### Diabetes

Because this condition relies so heavily on self-management, people who have diabetes benefit from a program tailored to them, whether they're newly diagnosed or have been coping with diabetes for a long time.



### Cardiac Rehab

Many of these patients are older or have compromised immunity, placing them at high risk during outbreaks of COVID-19 or the flu. Providing telehealth visits and digital wellness care is crucial for this population.



### Orthopedics

Driving to the clinic may be difficult for patients with limited mobility, particularly in the case of knee and hip replacement or surgery. As with cardiac patients, providing digital options lets these people get the care they need without bringing them in for appointments.



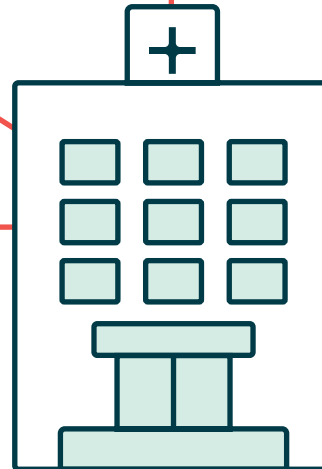
### Pregnancy

Women in this age group are power technology users—they're active online and expect digital options for their health care. They also want as much information about their pregnancy and their baby as possible over the course of nine months.



### Colonoscopy and Endoscopy

Pre-procedure prep at home is a critical part of these procedures. A digital program that explains the importance of arriving for the appointment properly prepared can reduce the need to reschedule appointments, which improves hospital efficiency and patient satisfaction.



A good digital health program packages together everything you need to provide longitudinal delivery across the continuum of care. It helps you improve patient outcomes, increase revenue, and free up resources.



Well-designed, plain-language health education to hold people's interest and make learning easy



Online delivery to ensure you can reach patients from all walks of life



Patient satisfaction surveys to help you gauge what works and what can be improved



Automated messaging to keep patients engaged and on track



Existing workflow integration to save your team time



Customization to make the programs fit your organization

Learn more about Digital Health Programs  
from Healthwise by visiting [our website](#).

Let us help you create meaningful connections with your patients—no matter where they are.



# Sources

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