

# HOW TO BECOME A TRUE CONVENIENT CARE PROVIDER

7 PROFITABLE PATHS TO BECOMING YOUR COMMUNITY'S MOST RECOMMENDED HEALTHCARE FACILITY



## INSIDE THIS EBOOK

- The app that ends the long wait for healthcare forever
- Simple strategies to get patients in and out quicker... without compromising care
- How to usher in and lead a "patient-first" culture that sets the bar for healthcare in your community

# WINNING THE PATIENT-DRIVEN MARKET

The healthcare industry has become as diverse as the populations it serves. From urgent care clinics to specialized outpatient surgery centers to the traditional hospital ER, each of these facilities functions in its own unique way. But all share a critically important factor: patients. As different and unique as patients are, all crave a provider that respects their time and fits their lifestyle. Providers of every type should make convenient access to care a top priority, hence a convenient care provider.

Use this eBook as your guide. It's packed with usable advice on how to lead a patient-driven market that places a premium on convenience—without sacrificing care. In fact, many of the strategies outlined pinpoint where improvements can be made. Read on to discover seven simple paths to becoming your community's most recommended convenient care provider.

## The Convenient Care Landscape

✓ **Walk-In: Urgent Care, Retail Clinics, ER, Pharmacy & Lab**

✓ **Scheduled Services: Outpatient, Specialty Practices and Diagnostics**

✓ **Ambulatory Surgery Centers**

### **Where the healthcare dollars are...**

- Between 2006-2014 outpatient spending rose by more than 82 percent<sup>1</sup>
- Ambulatory care spending rose 7.4 percent in Q1 2016<sup>2</sup>
- Outpatient center spending increased 11 percent between Q1 2015 and Q1 2016<sup>3</sup>

# CHAPTER 1: HOW TO INCREASE REVENUE... BY IMPROVING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

In this chapter,  
learn how to:

- ✓ Streamline the check-in process
- ✓ Reduce wait times and patient frustration
- ✓ Proactively manage the patient experience
- ✓ Own the patient feedback process

Put simply, the patient experience matters. It matters to patients in severe discomfort or pain. And it matters to payers, who increasingly make use of patient satisfaction scores to reward—or penalize—providers for the patient experience they create. This section outlines four paths to improve patient satisfaction and boost the provider's bottom line.

The Patient Experience  
Is Key for Profitability

- Higher patient satisfaction scores net more reimbursement from payers
- 45 percent of commercial payers plan to roll out patient satisfaction scores
- CG-CAHPS—which include patient experience questions—will become mandatory for many outpatient facilities
- Social media amplifies both good and bad satisfaction scores

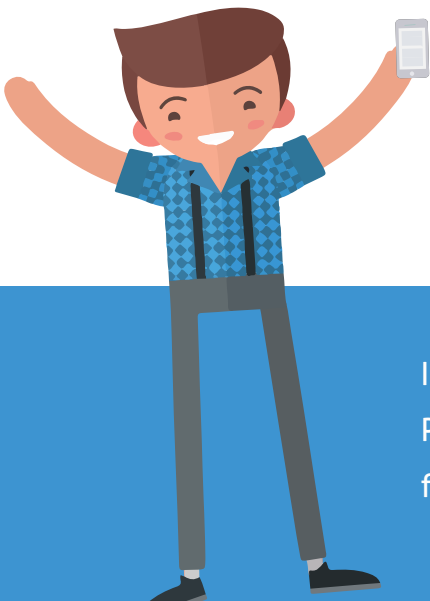
# PATH #1 SPEED UP CHECK-IN & REGISTRATION

For years now, the retail industry has used digital technology to create superior convenience for customers, including apps that enable online ordering, appointment scheduling and more. While traditional healthcare organizations have lagged behind in using these tools<sup>4</sup>, convenient care facilities are making the most of them.

**The strategy:** Allow patients to check-in prior to arrival. A Harvard study estimated that the average physician visit is 121 minutes long. Of that, only 20 minutes is spent actually interacting with the physician<sup>5</sup>. Allowing patients to check in before arriving gives them back valuable time that would otherwise be spent filling out paperwork in the lobby.

**The tools:** Online and mobile check in. Today facilities can enable check-in prior to arrival via the provider's website, either as a standalone app or integrated with an existing patient scheduling system. Be aware that such integration is not a complex effort; work only with vendors that don't charge an integration fee.

**How it increases revenue:** Online check-in capabilities expedite the patient's place in line, which improves the patient experience and satisfaction levels. It also enables faster patient throughput, giving providers the chance to see more patients.



## CONVENIENCE

is the **NEW** Loyalty.

In today's patient-driven market, it's all about accessibility and convenience. Patients want to feel valued and cared for, but they also crave a provider that fits their lifestyle - one that respects their time.

## PATH #2 REDUCE ANXIETY AND FRUSTRATION

In today's fast-paced world, most don't have time to sit in a provider's waiting room with no idea when they'll even be called. People have jobs to do, families to raise, errands to run and other responsibilities. So imagine the level of stress facilities can remove by enabling patients to carry on with their lives right up to their actual appointment.

**The strategy:** Make anywhere the waiting room. In a mobile world, today's convenient care provider strives to extend the waiting room to any place the patient may be—at home, work, the grocery store or any location.

**The tools:** A single online app, accessed from any device with an internet connection, eliminates the lack of insight on wait times. Such an app enables patients to:

- See estimated wait times
- Schedule appointments, get-in-line and check-in
- Receive real-time updates of wait times and status updates
- View step-by-step directions and facility maps

Of course, not all patients have a mobile device. As such, more convenient care facilities are installing wall monitors to keep patients better informed of wait times and their place in line. Either option gives patients a powerful sense of choosing whether or not to wait—which research shows greatly alleviates the frustration of waiting.<sup>6</sup>

**How it increases revenue:** A reputation for long wait times can eventually empty out a provider's waiting room. Filling it back up again comes at a steep cost—especially in communities with more competition. By contrast, a patient that can get in and out faster is more likely to recommend a facility to family members and friends.

SATISFIED  
PATIENT  
TELLS

3 PEOPLE

DISSATISFIED  
PATIENT  
TELLS

25 PEOPLE

# PATH #3 PROACTIVELY MANAGE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

A patient stuck in a waiting room has a lot of time to think...especially about why it's taking so long to be seen. Eventually, the patient will wonder if anyone even knows—or cares—how long the wait is getting. A true convenient care provider makes a point not to further stress a patient already burdened with what could be a serious health issue or medical emergency.

**The strategy:** From check-in to check-out, see where the patient is at in the process. Always have an immediate understanding of how long the patient has waited during each phase of the visit.

**The tools:** Automated, real time “work-lists” enable staff to visibly track the patient at every point of the visit. At any moment staff can see if a patient has spent more than the benchmark time in, say, the exam room or waiting for discharge instructions.

**How it increases revenue:** Automated worklists help to eliminate the bottlenecks that bring patient throughput to a halt. This helps providers see more patients, while improving patient satisfaction. A newfound visibility into where bottlenecks might be on the verge of happening allows staff to remain proactive instead of reactive—which improves staff morale. (Note that patient satisfaction is easier to achieve when employee satisfaction is high.)



# PATH #4 GATHER AND ANALYZE PATIENT FEEDBACK

Although patient feedback is crucial for assessing patient satisfaction levels, it requires intensive work to collect it. Even more work is involved in carefully analyzing feedback for improvement opportunities and preparing it for distribution to staff and other stakeholders. Today's busy convenient care provider depends on patient feedback but needs a better method to collect and utilize it.

**The strategy:** Send patients electronic surveys to gather feedback about the patient experience. Be sure to send these surveys while the visit is still fresh in the patient's mind—such as right after checkout. That gives a facility time to rectify an issue before a bad review is given online or in a CAHPS survey.

**The tools:** Online and mobile surveys that can be sent anytime (preferably as soon after the patient's visit as possible). Look for survey tools that display responses in visually digestible formats, and archive the results in one central location.

## How it increases revenue:

When patient survey results are used to make improvements, patient satisfaction levels rise, which leads to higher patient retention. Patient feedback, if quickly acted on, can also resolve problems before they result in payer penalties. Electronic survey tools also give providers the data they need to create their own rating and review systems, which they can post on their own websites to win more patients.



# CHAPTER 2: HOW TO INCREASE REVENUE BY OPTIMIZING BEHIND-THE-SCENE RESOURCES

In this section,  
learn how to:

- ✓ Make the most of every appointment slot
- ✓ Increase patient volume
- ✓ Identify and swiftly put an end to bottlenecks

How do providers give each patient the time and care they need while continuously accepting more patients? Many conclude they can't once they've reached a certain threshold. These providers would be greatly surprised to learn how much of their schedule they could optimize to accept more patients—while making the process more efficient for existing ones—without adding additional staff.

## PATH #5 MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY APPOINTMENT SLOT.

No show appointment slots are practically impossible to refill, but even when patients cancel well ahead of time, processes may not be in place to quickly rebook their spot. For many, it's an indication that it's time to recalibrate the appointment scheduling process.

**The strategy:** Reduce no-shows by providing patients the ability to confirm their appointment well ahead of time and remotely check-in. This gives advance notice of which patients are likely to show up. Fill unused appointment slots with real-time analytics that show where in the schedule more patients can be comfortably accommodated.

**The tools:** Online and mobile registration, plus analytics.

**How it increases revenue:** A schedule that stays full is always better for the bottom line, while reducing no shows decreases overall cancellations.

### The High Cost of No-Shows

Think a couple of no-shows every day is no big deal? Think again. At an average cost of \$150 each, that's \$72,000 a year—in addition to the labor costs of scheduling and follow up. Of course, the highest cost of all could be to the no-show patient's health.



## PATH #6 INCREASE PATIENT VOLUME



We've established why a full schedule is best. But how can providers with already full schedules add new patients, without putting a burden on existing resources?

**The strategy:** Create a superior patient experience that attracts and retains more patients—by reducing their time to receive quality care.

**The tools:** Queue management tools powered by advanced algorithms. Not all algorithms are created equal, which is why some queue management tools are little more than wait time counters. To that end, convenient care providers should seek tools that not only calculate wait times, but also identify how and where to speed these times up.

**How it increases revenue:** Transparency is a powerful liberator of resources. When patients know their place in line or how much longer they can expect to wait, they don't have to keep asking staff for this information. This leads to higher patient and employee satisfaction, while enabling staff to focus on getting patients processed and seen faster.

# PATH #7 IDENTIFY AND ELIMINATE BOTTLENECKS

Patients with different needs are often processed in the same way: the first one in is the first one to be seen. This can be a major contributing factor to bottlenecks that lead to patient dissatisfaction and entrenched practice inefficiencies. It's time to end this persistent problem for good.

**The strategy:** Prioritize more patients by their unique needs, without an excessive amount of time to receive care.

**The tools:** Color-coded service levels draw staff's attention to unacceptable wait times at different points in the care continuum—whether the lobby, an exam room or a post-discharge instructions window. This real-time information allows staff to be reallocated where they're needed most. Analytics reveal where more (or less) resources should be directed, preventing future backlogs.

**How it increases revenue:** Deeper insights help providers make better clinical and operational management decisions.



# CHAPTER 3: 7 CONVENIENT CARE TOOLS ONE CONVENIENT PLATFORM

To state the obvious, digital solutions for convenient care should be similarly easy for patients and staff to use. A vendor that is deeply versed in both technology and the healthcare environment is more likely to create such technologies. At a minimum, these apps should be hosted in a HIPAA-compliant, cloud environment, and integrate into existing systems at no additional cost. They should enable patients to do the following—and more—with ease:

- View estimated wait times
- Schedule and confirm existing appointments
- Get-in-line and check-in for appointments
- Complete forms
- Get pre-appointment instructions
- View facility maps
- Get post-appointment instructions
- Schedule future appointments
- Provide feedback

Just as important, these tools should equip staff with real-time dashboards to identify wait times and more in every node of their workflow. Analytic tools should supply custom reports to gain insight on where bottlenecks commonly originate.



# CHAPTER 4: TIME'S UP!

## THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE IS HERE

More providers are recognizing that patients value convenience. Yet there still remains a provider-patient gap when it comes to using mobile and online apps that make care more convenient. Patients are all for using these tools, while some providers consider the tools nice to have, but not yet a must.

These providers should take note that in 2015, millennials overtook Baby Boomers as the largest living generation in the US and by 2017 will carry the bulk of spending power in the United States.<sup>7</sup> This demographic expects innovation and convenience; in just one related example, 71 percent of millennials would like their provider to use an app for booking appointments.<sup>8</sup>

Further, in just a few short years 89 percent of all businesses will compete mainly on customer experience. By 2020, customer experience will overtake price and product as the key brand differentiator.<sup>9</sup>

**With all this as the backdrop, what is your facility waiting for to deliver a better patient experience?**



# SOURCES

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.beckersasc.com/asc-turnarounds-ideas-to-improve-performance/ambulatory-care-spending-rose-7-4-in-q1-2016-5-takeaways.html>

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.fiercehealthcare.com/it/tampa-general-cio-scott-arnold-consumer-like-conveniences-will-be-a-growing-demand-q-a>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/10/05/study-puts-dollar-value-time-spent-waiting-for-doctor/lf7KB4aU9mkY5qK8CqDYUO/story.html>

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<sup>7</sup>*Marketing to Millennials* guide by Curalate

<sup>8</sup>*State of the Connected Patient* report by Salesforce

<sup>9</sup><https://www.sprinklr.com/the-way/big-list-customer-experience-statistics/>