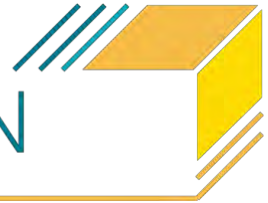


# **PUBLIC HEALTH & PATIENT ENGAGEMENT**

WHITE PAPER



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## Public Health & Patient Engagement White Paper

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### **Growing Imperative for Ethical Patient Engagement and Public Health Initiatives**

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Amid pressures on payers and health care provider organizations to take on greater financial responsibility for patient outcomes, there emerges a growing national health priority to utilize strategies that encourage people to make good choices about their health. The need for improved outcomes impacts not only population health, but also the economic viability of the nation's healthcare system, and individual pocketbooks. For instance, medication non-adherence remains a persistent challenge that costs \$300 billion annually.<sup>1</sup>

The need, importance and power of patient engagement takes on greater urgency during the worldwide battle with COVID-19. With every government regulator and influencer stressing the need for immune-boosting health behaviors, social-distancing, sequestering, frequent hand-washing and other seismic personal behavioral changes, these recommendations are likely to soon transition to mandates designed to stem the transmission of this potentially deadly virus. The current pandemic experience demonstrates just how powerful individual practices influence population health and outcomes.

This is an especially difficult time for those living with chronic diseases, such as arthritis, asthma, cancer, COPD and diabetes. These diseases will continue to tax the resources of payers, providers and patients and bring financial burdens that accelerate year over year. In



this challenging environment, efforts must go beyond simply encouraging adherence to medication, therapies and treatment. Today, the need for lifestyle changes is a strategic imperative that ties in directly to individual efforts to exercise, eat better and avoid behaviors that harm their health -- such as smoking, poor diet and alcohol consumption.

Unfortunately, most physicians feel discouraged about improving health outcomes when they have minimal influence over a patient's behavior at home or work.

For these reasons, patient engagement has become fundamental to optimal public health. Systematic, population-focused interventions are required to address population-wide issues.

The key lies in understanding what is required for increasing patient engagement. This means developing an understanding and adapting to a patient's knowledge, skills, ability and willingness to manage their own health through interventions and tools designed to encourage regular engagement and promote and reinforce positive patient behavior. For example, mobile apps and devices to track activity levels, reminders for preventive care and alerts to prompt regular exercise can be an excellent way to encourage and illuminate patient behavior.

The goal is to effectively reach specific patient groups that are currently not engaged or fail to fully appreciate the value of becoming more engaged in managing their health. While patient engagement *per se* is not a social determinant of health (SDoH), it can be influenced by these determinants, which include social status, stress, early life, social exclusion, employment, addiction and insecurities related to food and transportation. Significantly, medical care is estimated to account for only 10-20% of the modifiable contributors to healthy outcomes for a population, while the other 80-90% are attributed to SDoH.<sup>2</sup>

### **Public Health Concepts Centered on Patient Engagement**

Patient activation refers to a patient's knowledge, skills, ability and willingness to manage his or her own health and care. As a broader term, patient engagement combines interventions designed to increase activation and promote positive patient behavior, such as obtaining preventive care or exercising regularly.<sup>3</sup>

Strategies for effective patient engagement include:<sup>4</sup>

- *Systematic, population-level solutions that require less individual effort* -- Implement strategies that work at the population level in addition to those that are focused on individuals. They are effective because they require less individual effort. For example, improving safety or building a park in an underserved neighborhood can be helpful for an entire community beyond individual health counseling.
- *Develop a multi-faceted approach that engages the patient on individual, interpersonal and community levels* -- Approaching an issue from several angles can be more effective than simply addressing it at one level. For example, the success of smoking cessation programs involved individual education and broader strategies, such as tobacco taxation, restaurant bans and public campaigns that impeded smoking and made it less socially acceptable.
- *Identify the root-cause, assess and capitalize on strengths and engage stakeholders* -- Whether designing a population or individual intervention, begin by understanding the root cause of the problem. For example, it's not effective to ask a patient to weigh themselves every day when they have trouble standing. It's also important to employ community resources and engage stakeholders.
- *Use strategies from behavioral economics to help individuals make good choices*— Understand that SDoH create an uneven playing field and behavioral economics make healthy choices a challenge for many individuals. Use strategies learned from behavioral economics, like framing questions differently or resetting defaults, to make it easier for people to make healthy choices.
- *Anticipate failure and learn from it* – This is where data and a quality improvement mindset are critical, i.e. plan, do, study, act. It's also important to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and build an infrastructure that anticipates failure. Use data to measure baselines and monitor success to recognize and scale successes and divert efforts away from ineffective programs.

Data analytics and technology are quickly becoming a reality for making better sense of public health data, which can inform interventions that will improve a population's health. As this capability evolves in public health and trickles down into patient engagement, ethical and legal challenges emerge in terms of maintaining patient privacy and developing sound policies and infrastructure to support data usage, data sharing and standardized practices.

## **Ethics of Patient Engagement**

Three broad categories of ethical issues delineate the different types of patient engagement:<sup>5</sup>

- Establishing a shared vision about goals of patient engagement and respective roles
- The process and method of engaging with patients
- Practical aspects of patient engagement

It's important to build from personal, professional and academic experiences, as well as traditions that stress the value of participation, empowerment and engagement. Patient engagement can be highly valuable, but special focus must go toward the process of engaging with patients and related ethical issues. Lessons taken from the literature on the ethics of participatory research can be transformed into organizational and quality improvement practices.<sup>6</sup>

Today, patients have unprecedented access to involvement in their care management plan and in some cases are participating as a full member of their care team. Patient-centric initiatives are often used to define evidence-based metrics and performance indicators that can be used to demonstrate return on investment and overall return to the organization and patients.

While a robust array of technology solutions exist that satisfy modern consumer expectations, much thought needs to be placed upon what patient data elements will truly add value. How will that data be collected in a manner that it not burdensome to the patient? How will that data be securely collected and stored in accordance with Federal privacy regulations? And finally, how will that data be ethically and securely used and reported for research, analytics and outcome measurement purposes to maintain patient privacy?

The Thought Leadership & Innovation Foundation (TLI) has developed patient engagement platforms that considers these very points. We have several platform models through which patient data can be securely collected in a way that simplifies patient engagement—without burdening the patient. We are adept at leveraging both new and existing technologies in a manner that aligns with key outcomes for a specific community or organization. Different community or organizational objectives may very well dictate different platforms in order to be successful in a specific environment. TLI understands how to architect the right mix of



technology that will align with clinical workflows, starting with the patient, and deliver an exceptional patient experience in this era of health consumerism and high patient engagement. Several solutions where we have seen high success rates for patient engagement include a mixture of questionnaires and surveys, web-based software, mobile applications and social media. The technology exists today to securely collect data through each of these mechanisms and convert the data into information through robust analytics.

When it comes to patient engagement, analytics play a key role in helping healthcare professionals prioritize key focus areas, assess return on investment, help guide improvements and make the financial case for this important work.

A well-planned patient engagement strategy should reflect high ethical principles and use data to target efforts on solving key patient challenges and employing interventions that advance patient engagement, enhance the patient experience and improve health outcomes in the most cost-effective way possible.

## **Work With Us**

As we continue in our mission is to advance the transformative development and delivery of public health and patient engagement strategies, TLI is partnering across multiple areas, including industry, academia, government and the non-profit community to explore innovative strategies for solving today's most challenging issues.

The world is a volatile place, full of uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, so we specialize in thinking, leading and innovating to better understand the old and explore the new -- while taking a grounded, systematic approach to meaningful change.

We do this by integrating science, technology and strategy for the greater good, relying on our in-depth knowledge, remaining intellectually prehensile and rising above the fray. We understand that a single change can alter the complex human network in a way that fundamentally impacts individual lives and, ultimately, the fate of humanity.

**To learn more about TLI visit [here](#).**



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<sup>1</sup> Iuga, Aurel O, and Maura J McGuire; Adherence and health care costs; Risk management and healthcare policy vol. 7 35-44.; Feb. 20, 2014; doi:10.2147/RMHP.S19801; accessed March 25, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Magnan, Sanne; Social Determinants of Health 101 for Health Care: Five Plus Five; National Academy of Medicine; October 9, 2017  
<https://nam.edu/social-determinants-of-health-101-for-health-care-five-plus-five/>; accessed March 25, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> James, Julia; Patient Engagement; Health Affairs; Feb. 14, 2013;  
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20130214.898775/full/>; accessed March 25, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> O'Keefe, Maggie & Dunn, Marie; Improve Patient Engagement with Five Public Health-Inspired Principles; Health Catalyst; Oct. 18, 2016; <https://www.healthcatalyst.com/successful-patient-engagement-with-5-public-health-principles>; accessed March 25, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Montreuil M, Martineau JT, Racine E.; Exploring Ethical Issues Related to Patient Engagement in Healthcare: Patient, Clinician and Researcher's Perspectives; J Bioeth Inq. 2019;16(2):237–248. doi:10.1007/s11673-019-09904-6; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30741392/>; accessed March 25, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Montreuil, 2019.