A Prescription for Patient Satisfaction

ACF TECHNOLOGIES | 2021 WHITEPAPER

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Healthcare organizations across the country are struggling with soaring costs, diminishing margins and overburdened resources.

Compounding matters, healthcare professionals are under intense pressure to improve patient satisfaction ratings.

In 2017, the U.S. government withheld $1.7 billion in Medicare reimbursements from hospitals with poor performance on the HCAHPS survey.

The reason: under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicare incentive programs incorporate patient satisfaction ratings in the overall measure of quality patient care.

Most hospital administrators and healthcare leaders are doing all they can to improve patient satisfaction ratings. However, they find themselves facing a seemingly insurmountable task; constrained by a scarcity of resources.

This white paper examines four of the most significant challenges to improving patient satisfaction ratings, and offers insight into how Patient Experience Management (PXM) methodologies can help overcome each of them.

THE **DIAGNOSIS** FOR **BETTER PATIENT SATISFACTION**

Healthcare facilities diagnosed with poor patient satisfaction scores typically exhibit four common symptoms:

- A Poor Patient Experience
- Operational Inefficiency
- Low Employee Engagement
- Poor Resource Utilization

Each symptom tends to agravate the others. And, as with any medical diagnosis, if left untreated, poor patient satisfaction will continue to fester and irritate healthcare facilities.

SO, WHAT IS THE **PRESCRIPTION?**

A healthy dose of Patient Experience Management (PXM) is the answer - a remedy designed to tackle all four challenges by:

- Empowering patients to take control of their appointment scheduling and managment
- Improving patient throughput by matching patient volumes with hospital resources
- Automating time-consuming administrative tasks, allowing healthcare professionals to focus on patient care
- Shortening actual and perceived wait times through relevant personalized communication
- Offering virtual queuing services and remote "check-in" functions to reduce patient wait time
- Enriching patient engagement through value added content and more productive waiting
- Encouraging patient feedback through out the continue of care, offering useful insight into patient experiences

PATIENT NO - SHOW

"Patient no-shows and Inefficiencies in Scheduling cost the U.S. Healthcare System more than $150 billion a year."

When combined with existing Hospital Information Systems (HIS), PXM solutions serve to remove friction from the patient journey. Engaging patients and staff throughout the continuum of care, improving overall operational efficiency, and ultimately delivering a more consistent, positive patient experience. Thereby alleviating the confusion, anxiety and stress typically associated with a hospital visit.

CREATE BETTER PATIENT EXPERIENCE

THE TYPICAL PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Put yourself in Angela's shoes. A Naval veteran, she has chronic back issues and visits your hospital's orthopedic clinic frequently. Angela has a great relationship with her doctor but dreads visiting the hospital. She spends countless hours on hold managing her appointments and has read every magazine in the waiting room.

Angela is not alone. Waiting time is the most significant contributor to lousy patient experiences with up to 65% of patient's rate waiting times in clinics as unsatisfactory, causing dissatisfaction with the entire visit.

Angela's most frustrating wait is the one she cannot control – the waiting room. After 20 minutes, she begins to feel her time is being wasted and in an era of consumer health, it's likely that patients who believe healthcare providers don't respect their time will take their business elsewhere.

There is a solution to the frustration that Angela, and patients like her, experience: a solution that saves her time, improves her experience, and ultimately saves hospitals money.

PXM solutions work with HIS to deliver a more patient - centric approach, putting Angela at the center of the process.

For instance, when she goes online to book her appointment, the system automatically guides her towards less busy times. Thereby reducing the likelihood she will get caught waiting beyond an acceptable period of time.

THE TYPICAL PATIENT EXPERIENCE PXM

Here´s what Angela´s experience might look like at a hospital running PXM technologies.

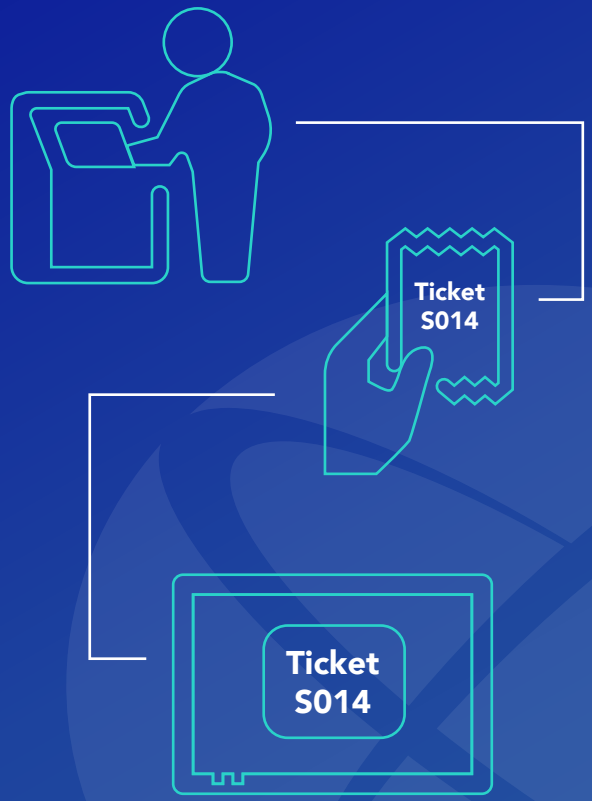
On arrival at the hospital, a Patient Experience Concierge helps Angela check-in using an automated admissions kiosk. She then makes her way to a lobby-style waiting area; where wait times are clearly visible on digital media; where her ticket number rather than her name is called; and, where television programming or content relevant to her condition keeps her entertained, making waiting more relaxed and acceptable.

When Angela´s ticket number is called, she receives a notification on her mobile device - in case she happened to leave the lobby for a coffee, or to use the facilities.

The notification offers Angela directions from the lobby to her doctor´s consultation room, reducing reliance on hospital staff to help her navigate the confusing maze of corridors. However, Angela knows the route, so rejects the offer for indoor navigation.

"ACF´s Patient Experience Management Solutions have helped us cut patient visit times by at least 45 minutes."

Col. Mark Thompson, Commander at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center



During her appointment, Angela´s doctor prescribes a course of medication. The pharmacy is notified of the prescription and because Angela is enrolled in a virtual queue, she is automatically transferred to the pharmacy queue - ensuring that by the time she arrives there, her prescription is ready for collection.

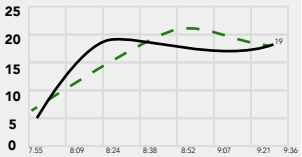
While virtual queuing solutions help reduce wait times for patients, they also help hospital staff manage resource allocation effectively.

ACF´s Queuing Performance Dashboard provides insight into overall patient throughput, helping hospital managers visualize bottlenecks in the continuum of care and apply resources where necessary.

GHC Pharmacy

	Intake	Filling	Dispense	Total Visit
Wait Time	00:12:32	00:22:06	00:06:03	00:34:51
Total Time	00:11:43	00:31:09	00:08:11	00:44:05
Patients	7	16	9	Expected WT: - - - Actual WT:-------
Prescription	12	23	13	

Intake Wait Time Goal:	10 mins
Required Intake Service Rate:	3.2 mins
Current Intake Service Rate:	2.5 mins



In addition, PXM solutions collect data throughout the patient journey and use predictive algorithms to alert hospital managers when service level targets are at risk of being missed. Giving them the opportunity to take corrective actions, to ensure operational efficiency.

Throughout her visit, Angela is encouraged to rate her experience. Giving administrative staff insight into specific pain points in the patient experience, so that with every visit, Angela´s experience improves.

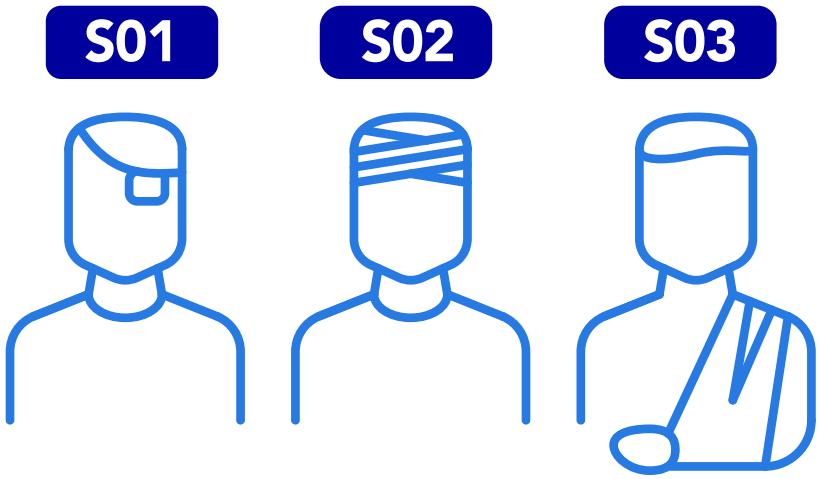
IMPROVE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

With advances in modern medicine, the number of patients seen in the outpatient setting is growing, and as the volume of outpatients increases so does the likelihood of operational inefficiencies.

Let's talk about Clive, as an example. He has been diagnosed with cancer. He regularly visits your hospital's outpatient clinic for a variety of medical procedures: oncology, radiation therapy, surgery and supportive care services, some of which take place on the same visit.

However, Clive becomes frustrated when bottlenecks in your hospital's processes cause unnecessary delays between procedures.

One way of removing bottlenecks from the patient flow is using PXM. In admissions, an area is typically overstaffed due to the volume of administrative tasks, but patient self-service kiosks automate the check-in process. This reduces the costs associated with low-value tasks and enables healthcare staff to focus more time on other pressing clinical duties.



Beyond admissions, Patient Flow Analysis helps to identify inefficiencies in patient throughput the moment they arise. ACF's Queuing Performance and Workforce Management modules combine to help hospital managers optimize the productivity of available staff and efficiently serve anticipated patients.

Workforce Management helps anticipate busy times and demand for services offered at healthcare facilities, helping you identify inefficiencies across the continuum of care and allowing you to improve in these areas.

Forecasting: Forecasting involves data collection and analysis of demand for certain services on certain days, weeks, or hours of the day. Variables like seasons and severe weather are taken into account.

Planning: The Planning in this step involves incorporating variables that may affect demand and creating a model to base predictive calculations on, and planning staff to meet that demand within your desired service threshold.

Scheduling: In this step, you allocate your staff to meet the predicted demand, and directly manage your resources to create a schedule.

Adherence: Once you have executed a schedule, you can evaluate your planned and executed schedule, and analyze performance.

Implementing Workforce Management and Queuing performance solutions also makes it easier to deal with 'walk-in' patients when scheduled patients do not arrive.

Having patients in the right place at the right time is essential to optimizing operational efficiency and reducing time wasted. Notifications and indoor wayfinding assist patients in finding their way to the correct treatment rooms, in time for their appointment and without the need for an escort. When Clive's number is called, a notification to his mobile device informs him that he is next in line at radiation, and offers indoor directions to the treatment area.

At the same time, the team in radiation knows that Clive is on his way and with the virtual queuing system linked to patient records, they know what Clive needs before he enters the treatment room; ensuring hospital staff are prepared and able to treat more patients.

Access to real-time analytics, including footfall, waiting time, and treatment time, gives hospital administrators the data they need to predict capacity requirements, remove bottlenecks and improve patient throughput - delivering a healthier bottom line.

RAISE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Too often hospital leaders tend to overlook the link between patient satisfaction and employee engagement. However, when hospitals create an engaging and high-performance-oriented work experience, they improve not only patient satisfaction but also the quality of care outcomes – both are core criteria in meeting incentive goals under value-based purchasing.

"In 2013 the World Health Organization reported that the world will be short of 12.9 million health-care workers by 2035; at the time, that figure stood at 7.2 million."

While hospitals across the country struggle to find and retain skilled, experienced and committed employees, less than half (44%) of the U.S. hospital workforce is considered highly engaged.

Among the reasons given by staff, complaints include, the lack of time with patients due to staff being exacerbated by an overload of administrative tasks or non-clinical assignments, and work overload, which 40 percent of healthcare workers responded that they felt challenges by work overload at their job.

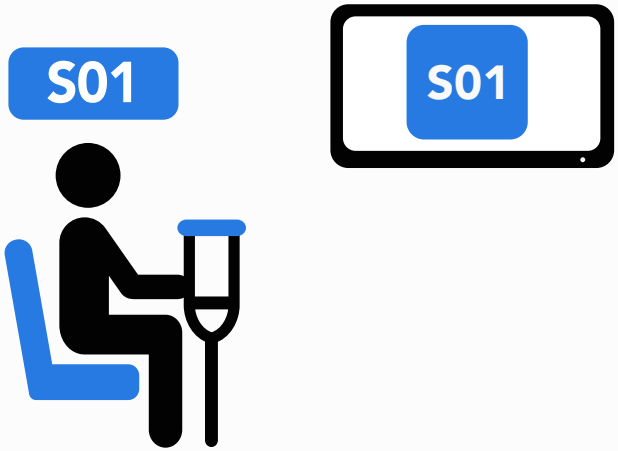
PXM systems help put patients at ease; leaving them feeling relaxed, and friendlier toward hospital staff, contributing to a positive work environment.

PXM also removes repetitive administrative tasks from the patient journey, reducing the time spent by hospital employees on non-value adding services; tasks that keep them away from patients and prevent them from performing the clinical duties they are trained to perform.

Staff take pride in working for a healthcare pro vider with a PXM solution in place.

Viewing the work environment as technologically advanced, contributing to a sense of professionalism, and giving employees confidence that patients are informed, and appropriately matched to clinicians. Real-time monitoring and resource planning inherent in PXM systems help hospital administrators to resource facilities based on trends in patient volumes, ensuring sufficient resources are on hand during peak times, and that staff don't feel stretched.

While patient surveys and other feedback mechanisms are crucial for improving patient satisfaction, they also show the positive effects of staff efforts, helping increase employee engagement and reinforcing a caring behavior.



OPTIMIZE RESOURCE UTILIZATION

Hospital space comes at a premium, meaning healthcare providers need to re-think the way healthcare is delivered and facilities are designed. Already, outpatient services are shifting from multi-tenant buildings to Consolidated Practice Buildings (CPB), which Include:

Shared or conso-lidated waiting space

Single check-in area for the entire facility

Unified records, billing and back-office functions

Unlike traditional facilities, CPB layouts provide flexibility so that treatment rooms serve for multiple specialties, enabling clinics and hospitals to respond to patient needs without having to alter the entire building plan. PXM adds support to the CPB model by ensuring that patients can still find their way to the right place at the right time, as facilities adjust to accommodate changes in demand.

PXM supports the single reception, consolidated waiting room design, further streamlining the admissions process. Self-service kiosks take pressure off the front desk, allowing patients to check-in by themselves. Digital displays and mobile apps notify patients in consolidated waiting areas of anticipated wait times and call their ticket number when it is time for their appointment.

PXM integration with HIS means a patient automatically transfers from one queue to another when undergoing multiple consults in the same visit; while indoor navigation assists them to find treatment rooms in a flexible environment.

PXM gives hospital administrators a consolidated view of patient flow trends, allowing them to efficiently match patient needs with available resources–equipment, treatment rooms and physicians.

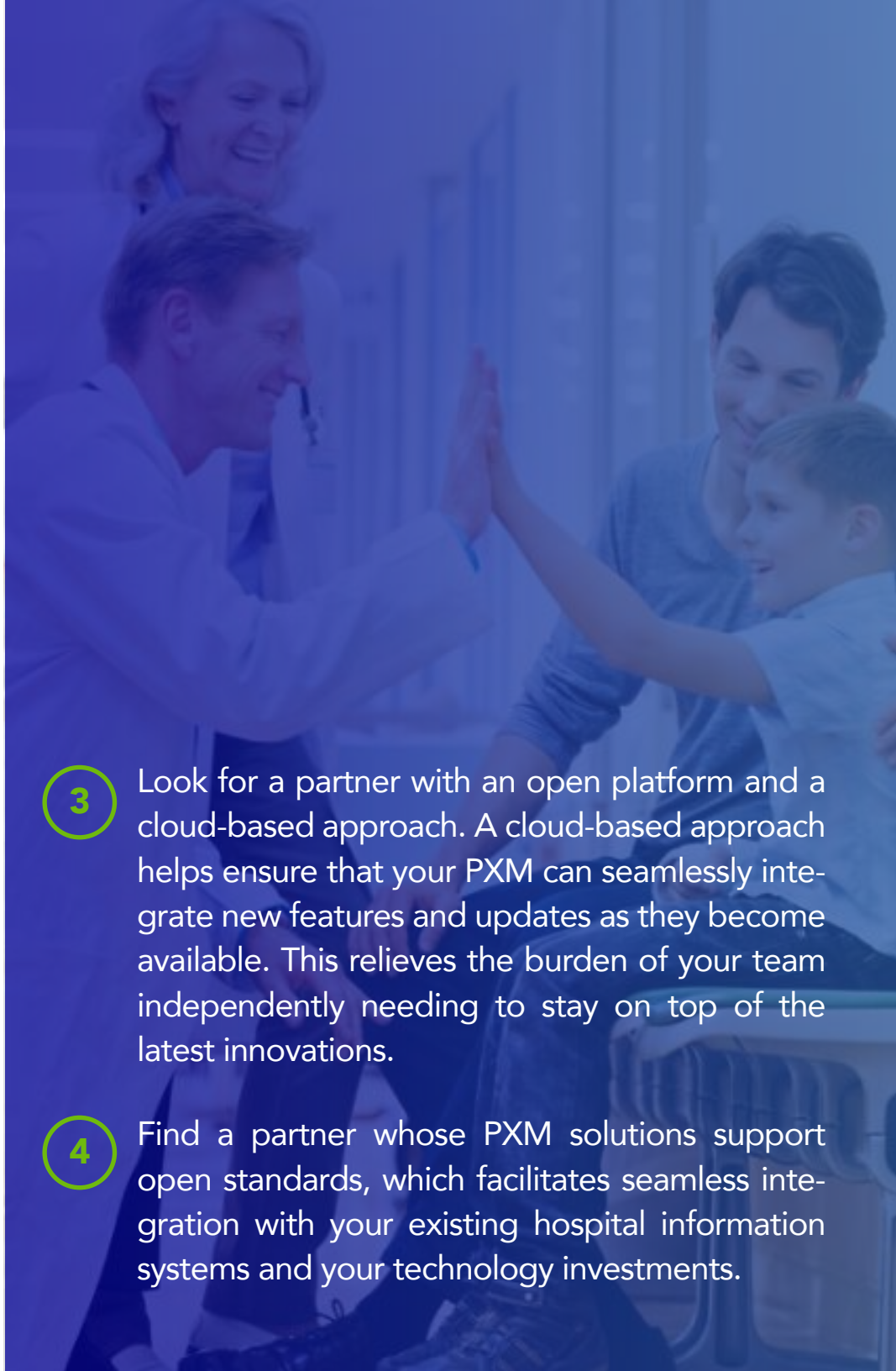
The result is a more efficient use of resources, reduced patient wait times and higher patient satisfaction.

CHOOSING YOUR PXM PARTNER

Cost, time and quality are among the greatest concerns customers have when undertaking any technology project. Working with a partner specializing in Patient Experience Management can help you address all three concerns and run projects smoothly—whether you have an in-house team of your own, or you plan to completely outsource your PXM project.

1. Look for a PXM solution provider that has actual experience working with the healthcare industry. A partner with healthcare experience will have a better understanding of patient wants and needs, as well as informed, educated perspectives on how to improve the patient experience.

2. Find a partner with a history of successful hospital PXM deployments who can capitalize on previous knowledge gained and help speed up your development time.



3. Look for a partner with an open platform and a cloud-based approach. A cloud-based approach helps ensure that your PXM can seamlessly integrate new features and updates as they become available. This relieves the burden of your team independently needing to stay on top of the latest innovations.

4. Find a partner whose PXM solutions support open standards, which facilitates seamless integration with your existing hospital information systems and your technology investments.

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ACF helps healthcare providers improve the patient journey from home to hospital. With a track record of successfully delivering PXM solutions for clients in more than 16 countries over two decades, we have helped public and private healthcare facilities leverage their existing technology infrastructure, in combination with our PXM solutions, to deliver remarkable patient experiences. We are committed to helping you transform your patient journey, improve operational efficiency and increase patient satisfaction.

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