



Equitable Listening to Improve Outcomes in Healthcare

A guide to addressing health disparities and inequities

Medallia



The health disparities gap among certain demographics continues to grow, making it harder to access equitable and affordable care. Addressing health disparities is vital for improving the quality of care and outcomes for everyone while reducing overall medical costs. Organizations that implement a fair and impartial approach to managing patient feedback and sentiment across the entire patient demographic will increase patient trust and improve outcomes.

While listening and communicating continues to be a top priority for providers and a key factor in influencing the patient experience¹, less focus has been placed on where the feedback coming from and who is providing the feedback. For that reason, organizations are taking a broader approach to capturing, understanding, and responding to the voices of all patients in a way that is fair, impartial, and representative all of those served.

INTRODUCING: EQUITABLE LISTENING

Equitable listening focuses on improving patient experiences, including those where current inequities and disparities exist. To do this, organizations must be intentional in capturing and including feedback from patients, families, communities, and members—especially those who are often marginalized in the healthcare system and unable or unwilling to respond due to a lack of trust.

Patients marginalized in the current healthcare system often feel their voices need to be valued, leading to a lack of motivation to provide feedback. However, it is crucial for healthcare providers to understand that these patients' feedback is not just valuable, it is essential. Their experiences can provide the key insights needed for the development of equitable treatment and services.

As traditional survey methods are increasingly unable to meet the requirements for this process, new ways of capturing both structured and unstructured patient feedback, such as AI or natural language processing (NLP)-enabled technology, have emerged. These innovative tools hold the potential to revolutionize the way we listen to patients, enabling us to hear their experiences when and where they are willing to describe them.

While the acceleration of digital transformation has been a crucial enabler of equitable listening, it can be challenging to listen in a manner that is fair, impartial, and representative. Bias can impact and distort the equitable listening process at all stages, from capturing patient feedback and understanding the data to acting on the information.

Equitable listening is the process of capturing and understanding information, and responding in a way that is fair, impartial and representative of those served

IN THIS PAPER, WE WILL COVER:

- 01 Best practices for equitably capturing the voices of your patients
- 02 Ways to understand your patient data
- 03 How to use this information to drive equitable action

01 Capturing Patient Feedback

Healthcare decisions must be made based on unbiased information, making capturing representative and impartial feedback from patients and families the cornerstone of equitable listening. However, that is only sometimes the case when deploying only traditional feedback methods such as mail and phone.

Why Traditional Feedback Methods Can Be Limiting:

- Relying on mail and phone alone has resulted in a drop in [CAHPS Medicare Advantage survey](#) response rates (from almost 65% to close to 38%)²
- 67% of consumers will not pick up a call and phone survey response rates have [dropped to 6%](#) in 2018³
- Consumers are 7x more likely to respond SMS than phone⁴

Here are some of the reasons why organizations are moving beyond traditional feedback methods:



Survey method may not be in patient's preferred feedback mode



Language barriers prevent patient from responding or understanding question



Survey method may not reach all patients



Cultural differences result in different response patterns

Coupled with the fact that the surveys are not administered in a timely fashion, these traditional methods generate low response rates. Even in the case of the Medicare Advantage and Prescription Drug Plan CAHPS Survey, where mail and phone channels have been deployed together, response rates have dropped from 64.8% in 2009 to 38.4% in 2019.⁵

To overcome these limitations and barriers, healthcare providers should focus on aligning the technology to the preferences of the patient segments they serve. For example, the [Prelude Network](#) uses technology such as two-way text messaging, a popular feedback method that consumers prefer over traditional surveys, to not only provide quick feedback but also to capture information of a larger share of their patients.

The Power of 2-Way Text Messaging

After deploying Medallia, the Prelude Network is able to send an SMS within 15 minutes of an interaction to their patients to capture patient feedback. The response rate is 37%, compared to the .03% the company achieved in a one-time market research study.⁶

As feedback is being captured beyond traditional mechanisms such as social media posts, blogs, reviews, videos or browsing behavior, AI- and NLP-enabled technologies can turn this data into actionable insights that leaders can use to drive change.



02 Understanding Patient Data

Ensure You Are Capturing Unbiased Feedback with These Questions:

- ✓ Do my patient experience responses mirror that of the population I serve?
- ✓ Do I provide multiple modes of feedback capture?
- ✓ Which modality of survey do different segments of my populations respond to most commonly?
- ✓ Am I leveraging modern engagement tools like text messaging?
- ✓ Am I asking my patients and employees if they feel like they are treated fairly?

To effectively understand the data collected, organizations need to adopt a focused data analysis approach. However, without this approach, organizations can face two common barriers at this step in the equitable listening process:

- Analyzing the data without considering patient characteristics such as race, gender (identity), sexual orientation, income, and age to understand meaningful differences across patient populations
- Synthesizing the data manually which can introduce bias and skewed data responses

Fortunately, there are several ways that healthcare providers can overcome these barriers. First, it requires looking beyond high-level patient results by focusing on different patient segments identified by one or more demographic factors, such as race, gender (identity), sexual orientation, income, or age that are experiencing healthcare disparities and inequities. Their voices are especially important when trying to understand where to make improvements in the patient experience.

Second, it requires sharing this data across the organization in a scalable, automated fashion to provide decision makers with relevant and meaningful insights to take action. By democratizing the data and making it available to all care teams and administrators, they will be more effective in where and how to drive change.

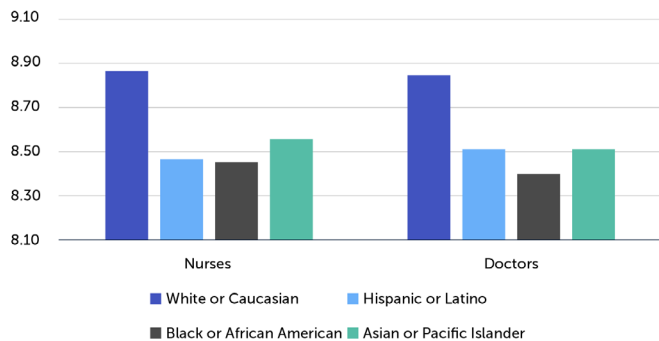
To effectively understand your patient data and avoid potential biases, healthcare providers turn to automated data analysis tools. Instead of relying on manual and subjective interpretation of unstructured data, providers can adopt AI and NLP-enabled technologies that can automatically summarize themes and sentiment without manually manipulating the raw data.

Digging into the Data to Uncover Disparities

Based on Medallia Panel Survey data of 8,707 consumers that recently received healthcare services in a hospital, we discovered differences among certain population segments as it relates to listening, understanding, and being treated with courtesy and respect.

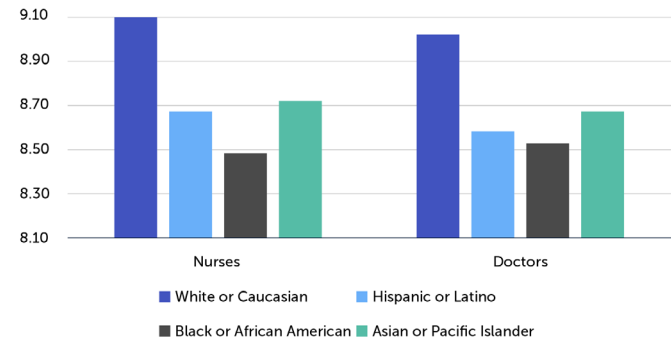
When answering, on a 0-10 scale, whether nurses and doctors listened to patients carefully, Black American patients were less likely to say that nurses or doctors listened to them carefully, relative to White Americans. Similar sentiment existed for Hispanic/Latino and AAPI patients.

Nurses/Doctors Listened Carefully to Me

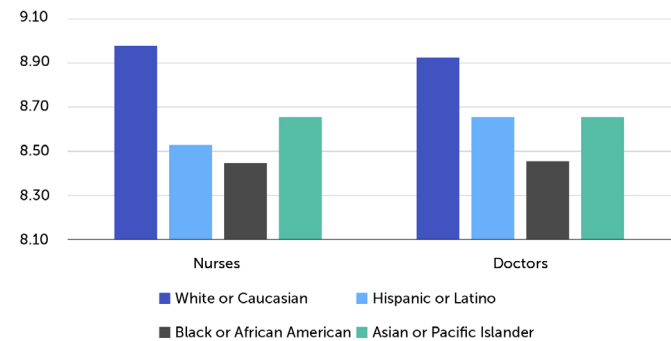


We further found differences in the extent to which patients perceived the healthcare provider to treat them with courtesy/respect and to speak to them in a way they could understand. Again, non-White or Caucasian populations responded lower to these questions, demonstrating the need to dig deeper and understand why these differences exist.

Nurses/Doctors Treated me with Courtesy & Respect



Nurses/Doctors Explained Things in a Way I Could Understand



03 Acting on the Results

Finally, the third step in establishing an equitable listening framework includes 1) acting on impartial and unbiased insights and 2) involving the patients in the development of these solutions. While acting on feedback shows that you are truly listening to your patients to drive change, it should not stop there. Organizations need to implement human-centered design so patients have ownership in the process. By doing this, organizations can not only strengthen the provider-patient relationship but also increase loyalty.

Implementing crowdsourcing solutions allows patients and other stakeholders to share ideas and solutions that they believe can improve the patient experience and overcome inequities or inequalities. These ideas can then be up- or down-voted to understand which ones appear most popular. By bringing in the patients' voices at this step of the process, voices of patients at this step, healthcare providers ensure their solutions are truly responsive to patients' needs. Managers of this process need to focus on recruiting underrepresented patients while empowering employees to ensure their voices are included in this process. Together, they can quickly develop novel and creative solutions to improve the patient experience.

Crowdsourcing for Breaking Down Silos

Instead of solely relying on traditional surveys or interviews for feedback, the [Alzheimer's Society](#) used crowdsourcing to understand the challenges of consumers impacted by or caring for someone with dementia.

Within weeks, the Alzheimer's Society was able to sign on over a thousand different consumers onto Medallia's crowdsourcing platform that were able to voice their experiences with dementia.

Using crowdsourcing allowed the Alzheimer's Society to listen to a diverse and inclusive set of voices of those consumers that are the most impacted by dementia. The platform broke down silos by allowing everyone to vote on different ideas and concepts. Ultimately, it allowed the Alzheimer's Society to build the best solutions that meet the needs of those impacted by dementia.⁷

CONCLUSION

In order to improve health outcomes for all patients, healthcare organizations need to address health disparities and inequities across all patient populations.

Establishing an equitable listening framework requires capturing the voices of all patients through the various engagement methods, establishing an unbiased way to analyze the data to understand different patient populations, and incorporating patients into the co-design and solution process. By taking this holistic approach, it ensures that actions are taken and solutions are implemented to help address disparities and inequities in healthcare.

Learn how Medallia can partner with you to implement equitable listening in your organization, by visiting [medallia.com](https://www.medallia.com) →

¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/consumer-health-trends.html>

² <https://ma-pdpcahps.org/globalassets/ma-pdp/comparative-data/current-and-historic-overall-response-rates.pdf>

³ <https://ma-pdpcahps.org/globalassets/ma-pdp/comparative-data/current-and-historic-overall-response-rates.pdf>

⁴ <https://messagedesk.com/blog/text-messaging-statistics-facts-stats-insights/>

⁵ <https://ma-pdpcahps.org/globalassets/ma-pdp/comparative-data/current-and-historic-overall-response-rates.pdf>

⁶ https://www.medallia.com/wp-content/uploads/pdf/resources/MDLA20051_PreludeNetwork-CaseStudy-Levy-002-01.pdf

⁷ [Medallia MasterCast with Alzheimer's Society "Innovating with Diverse and Inclusive Voices"](#)

About Medallia

Medallia is the pioneer and market leader in Experience Management. Medallia's award-winning SaaS platform, the Medallia Experience Cloud, leads the market in the understanding and management of experience for customers, employees and citizens. Medallia captures experience signals created on daily journeys in person, digital and IoT interactions and applies proprietary AI technology to reveal personalized and predictive insights that can drive action with tremendous business results. Using Medallia Experience Cloud, customers can reduce churn, turn detractors into promoters and buyers and create in-the-moment cross-sell and up-sell opportunities, providing clear and potent returns on investment. www.medallia.com

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