Listening to Your Patients

How to Capture Feedback Along The Prescription Medication Journey

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Between 2015 and 2018, almost 46% of individuals in the United States used at least one prescription drug in the past 30 days. Furthermore, 11% of personal healthcare expenditures went into prescription medication.

Given the prevalent use of prescription drugs and the pervasiveness of pain points along the patient journey, it is important for pharmaceutical companies to better understand how patients are choosing and using their medications to create a positive and effective patient experience.

The key requirement for understanding the patient's experience with their medicine is feedback. Patient feedback and systems to elicit this feedback are an integral part of a patient-centered medication management framework.

To be patient-centered requires listening to the Voice of the Patient to develop and improve products and services. However, pharmaceutical companies need to be more proactive in seeking this type of input and develop patient relationships in which information easily flows both ways.

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Why Patient Feedback Matters

While patient feedback should be a key ingredient to creating a patient-centered experience, products, and services, it often is unsolicited or solicited through limited channels.

A recent review of published research on improving prescription drug labeling practices found that less than half of the studies directly involved patient feedback.

Moreover, qualitative research examining healthcare provider and patient feedback on prescription drug warning labels demonstrates the need for patient-centric design - actively collecting feedback over a variety of channels that enable pharmaceutical companies to better understand these needs and opportunities.

Other research shows the role that soliciting feedback can play in improving a patient's understanding of the drug and treatment. This research has found that soliciting patient feedback through — in this case — follow-up phone calls, was related to greater knowledge and more positive attitudes towards the drug. While the authors did not find differences in effectiveness and adherence, they note that these touch points provide an opportunity to alleviate misconceptions and concerns.

Our Study

To better understand how to facilitate this feedback process between patients, healthcare providers, and pharmaceutical companies, we conducted an online survey of 290 patients taking or having taken medications for several common illnesses (see Methodology for details).

While patients were generally satisfied with their prescription drug experience, we also found room for improvement when it comes to information needs, especially around the effectiveness of the drug or treatment, side effects, and cost management. We further found that only few patients had been directly in contact with or had given feedback to pharmaceutical companies.

Based on the insights gathered from our research, we identified three ways in which healthcare providers and pharmaceutical companies can connect with patients to solicit greater and more consistent feedback:

- Make multiple communication channels available
- Optimize digital channels
- Leverage the richness of unstructured data

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Make Different Communication Channels Available

Today's consumers are online already. A study by the Medallia Institute found that the majority of consumers prefer to use the channel that they are currently using for feedback because it is convenient and consumers perceive that this is the quickest way to receive a response. And many consumers are either on their mobile devices or laptops.

Providing these communication channels is not only important to solicit patient feedback—our research shows that patients are lacking important information about their medication which can impact their health and experience with the medication.

However, pharmaceutical companies today do not regularly engage with patients in the same way that they do with healthcare providers. In our study, most of the respondents indicated that they were not in contact with the pharmaceutical company manufacturing their medication. The ones that were in contact with the company at one point during their journey, however, were generally satisfied with their experience, showing that this interaction can indeed add value to their overall patient experience.

And in order to better engage with and capture feedback from their patients, they will need to meet them where they are and in the manner that is most convenient for them.

This means that pharmaceutical companies have to move beyond more traditional channels such as email, mail, or phone, and include digital channels — the same channels that patients have grown comfortable with when they are shopping, vacationing, or engaging with brands outside of healthcare.

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Our research shows that there are tremendous opportunities in adding different feedback channels. In most cases, there is a wide gap between how often patients indicated they had used a feedback channel and whether they would prefer this channel to give feedback about their medication. This shows that just the mere act of providing feedback channels will add value.

Email, for example, was the second most common way to give feedback for patients (40%) but twice as many would have preferred to use it, making it the most popular feedback channel among patients. Interestingly, the most commonly used channel — phone (61%) — was preferred less (54%), suggesting that pharmaceutical companies and healthcare providers, in general, should consider moving away from this channel or at least make other, more popular channels available.

We further saw large gaps between channel usage and preference for surveys (+32%), text messaging (+26%), and online reviews (+22%). These channels are qualitatively different in their convenience, speed, interactivity, anonymity, and the type of feedback that patients may be willing to give. Holistically, such a mix of channels not only allows patients to provide feedback via preferred platform or device, but also to offer the type of feedback that they want to share and insights into opportunities for further engagement. Providing multiple feedback channels improves response rates.

FEEDBACK CHANNEL	HAVE USED	PREFER TO USE	USAGE - PREFERENCE GAP
EMAIL	40%	80%	+40%
PHONE	61%	54%	-7%
SURVEYS	9%	41%	+32%
TEXT MESSAGING	14%	40%	+26%
CHAT	21%	40%	+19%
ONLINE REVIEWS	8%	30%	+22%
SOCIAL MEDIA	3%	13%	+10%

Figure 1

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1 in 5 patients indicated that they didn't feel well informed about crucial aspects of their treatment.

28% of patients didn't feel well informed about the side effects that may occur with the medication

20% of patients didn't feel well informed about when to expect positive health outcomes/improvements

Feeling informed about positive health outcomes is positively associated with overall satisfaction and valence of experience.

Use Richness of Unstructured Data Available in Digital Channels

Our study further hints at opportunities presented by unstructured data. Unstructured data, such as written comments left in open-ended survey questions or online, or verbal feedback captured in recordings, add value to more structured feedback collection efforts in various ways.

In their role as consumers, patients are familiar with using online surveys, review sites, forums, social media, and other means to leave feedback related to their experiences with a certain treatment and a specific drug.

In other industries, such content has presented a treasure trove of data companies can use to understand information gaps and pain points in a consumer's journey. A 2017 Medallia-Accenture study showed that companies that use text analytics to analyze social media data were 22% more likely to improve customer experience.

And patients have something to say: Almost every respondent in our survey answered the open-ended questions we posed, often in great detail. This is also echoed by ChenMed, a physician-led primary care provider, who switched from paper to online surveys to capture patient feedback. In only one quarter, the organization was able to obtain feedback from almost 4,000 patients: "The adoption from the patients was outstanding — they wrote paragraphs and paragraphs in the survey using this platform. For us, it was amazing to have the ability to get that feedback in a matter of seconds."

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In our research, the thoughtful open-ended responses allowed us to gain more insights into pain points such as paying for the medication, not understanding when to expect positive treatment outcomes, and potential side effects. Furthermore, it allowed us to more deeply understand how pharma companies can better connect and provide value to the patient experience.

Moreover, collecting unstructured feedback data — especially from online, public sources — has great potential for topics where patients are sensitive to privacy concerns. Given that many illnesses requiring life-saving drugs may be associated with stigma, patients may be wary of sharing certain information with healthcare providers directly, especially pharmaceutical companies.

Because patients often voluntarily share information online in environments that provide them with additional privacy protections (e.g., anonymity)—pharmaceutical companies may be able to get a much deeper understanding of their concerns.

Which type of information or resources from the pharmaceutical company would be helpful to you? (Common themes based on open-ended responses from n=290 respondents)

Information about:

- Side effects and long-term impact of using the medication

- Medical research and advances related to the medication

- Background information about the medication, including ingredients, sourcing

- Discounts and financial assistance

- General information about treatment and treatment alternatives

Figure 2

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Optimize Digital Channels for an Omnichannel Experience

Optimizing digital channels is crucial for communicating with patients who are already familiar with using apps, social media, and chat to connect with companies and share feedback.

Technology adoption, such as owning a smartphone, is already high. Generations such as millennials and Gen X have adoption rates of over 90%, highlighting that attention to digital channels is a must for healthcare providers, especially as younger generations seamlessly integrate digital and physical experiences.

While we find most respondents prefer to use email as their primary feedback channel, 40% of patients indicated that they would prefer other digital touch points, such as text messaging, chat, or surveys. In fact, for pharmaceutical companies, surveys were the second most preferred feedback channel for after email.

Importantly, research shows that consumers generally want to give feedback immediately. A Medallia study of 3,000 consumers showed that 53% stated that they wanted to leave feedback during or immediately after an interaction or transaction, and an additional 34% wanted to leave feedback within 24 hours. Thus, almost 90% of consumers indicated they want to give feedback within 24 hours of an interaction or faster. Digital channels provide the opportunity for such immediate feedback.

For example, Inception Fertility started sending out surveys via text messaging to patients within 15 minutes of their survey, asking how confident the patient felt about their care and whether they were likely to continue. The responses to these questions, if unfavorable, triggered a follow-up within 24 hours. By receiving immediate feedback and responding quickly,

Top 5 Devices Consumers Use When Giving Feedback

Mobile phone (65%)

Desktop / laptop (59%)

Tablet (26%)

Landline (26%)

Brand's mobile app (11%)

Source: Medallia Customer Engagement Study based on 3,000 consumers from US, UK, and Australia

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Inception was able to reduce their "no show" rate by 120% and improve their Google ratings. This case study highlights the benefits of quickly acting on feedback obtained after a patient-provider interaction to resolve any questions or concerns. Rapid response is critical for pharmaceutical companies that want to ensure patients—who may have further questions about the effectiveness of treatment—are well informed about their medication.

To optimize digital channels, pharmaceutical companies need to focus on how to use the mix of web, phone, and apps to capture the highest quality feedback. For example, interactive channels such as text messaging and chat may be more effective in contexts where patients are ready to give feedback "in-the-moment" but are typically not as useful to collect in-depth feedback.

An experiment conducted by Gallup, however, finds that text messaging can facilitate the collection of survey data when used as a supplemental invitation method to email. With any digital channels having benefits and limitations when it comes to capturing patient data, pharma companies have to be deliberate in how to use them to solicit patient feedback.

Conclusion

The Voice of The Patient holds powerful and actionable insights that can help life sciences companies better connect with patient needs in the moments that matter most. Such feedback moves beyond traditional research and enables actionable insights in these micro moments that can increase the relevance and velocity of content, resources, and services that help people get, start and stay on important medications.

Patient feedback is crucial in designing patient-centered products, services, and experiences. To collect this feedback, pharmaceutical companies need to meet their patients where they are, using a channel that is convenient for them to provide honest and meaningful feedback. Otherwise, they are missing out on an important opportunity to learn more about their patients and engage with them throughout their long-term journey with prescription drugs.

As patients are increasingly integrating digital platforms into their journeys, pharmaceutical companies need to ensure that not only are these touch points available for patient feedback but that they also leverage opportunities to gather insights from unstructured data that patients leave behind in this space.

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Methodology

In July 2021, Medallia surveyed 290 individuals through Prolific about their experiences with medication they are taking or have been taking in the past. Participants were screened based on medical conditions they indicated having, including autoimmune diseases, cancers, diabetes, mental health and behavior conditions, or metabolic problems. Seventy percent of respondents indicated that they are female, with a median age of 39 years. Eighty-five percent of respondents are White/Caucasian. The majority of the sample has graduated from college, is employed part-time or full-time (65%), and has private insurance (53%).

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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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