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whitepaper

Patient Journey Mapping

How to better understand and optimise your patient journey

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Mapping the patient journey to continuous improvement

A seamless customer experience is quickly becoming one of the defining factors of successful organisations in industries across the board. For medical organisations, patient experience and engagement are often a differentiating factor between hospitals. Understanding patient experience through every stage of their care helps hospitals improve overall patient experience and internal communication. This is where patient journey mapping comes in.

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What is Patient Journey?

Patient Journey is a medical app that enables clinics to streamline their process, reduce unnecessary costs, and improve healthcare outcomes. With an interactive timeline that coaches patients in preparing for surgery and helps them adhere to treatment protocols after discharge, patients become active participants in their own healthcare.

Our app helps hospitals guide their patients from a distance by providing the right information at the right time. In addition, the app collects valuable data such as PROMs and PREMs, pain levels, physical activity, wound healing and experiences. Essentially, we enable clinics to provide proactive and personalised healthcare – anywhere and at any time.

What is patient journey mapping?

Patient journey mapping involves mapping out the complete journey of a patient, from the first contact with the hospital until the last check-up. This provides you with an overview of how your patients interact with the hospital through many different touchpoints.

These experiences are connected with patient feelings and feedback to create an accurate picture of the hospital/patient relationship, helping identify where improvements can be made and streamlining processes to make health providers more efficient.

Patient journey mapping can help hospitals gain insight into:

- The moments of contact with the patient.
- The needs of the patient throughout their treatment.
- Where in the journey improvements can be made to create a better overall experience.

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Why patient journey mapping is essential

Medicine is complex by nature. While being treated, patients need to receive and process information about their condition, the treatment, risks, preparation, aftercare, and so on. Often times, pieces of this information puzzle get lost in the shuffle or can't be processed by the patient. Medical information can be intimidating and must be presented in a way that the patient can understand and participate in their treatment. Patient journey mapping is essential in identifying the shortfalls in your patient experience and understanding your patients' needs better. Building a journey that meets the needs of your patients benefits the hospital-patient relationship in a number of ways:

Building a journey that meets the needs of your patients benefits the hospital-patient relationship in a number of ways:

- By preparing and collecting data on patients at home, hospitals can streamline their own processes. Healthcare providers can determine when it's necessary to intervene if a patient reports higher than expected pain or when to skip an appointment if the patient reports no pain or complications at all.

- Patients are better prepared with the knowledge to participate in shared decision making as well as timely reminders that help with things like taking medication properly, keeping up with recovery exercises, organising homecare, and adhering to fasting protocol before surgery.

- Hospitals can reduce unnecessary costs by making it easy for patients to adhere to treatment protocols before and after surgery. By communicating with patients throughout the process, they can limit the amount of postponed procedures and reach out to patients when needed, not just when scheduled.

- Patient journey mapping enables hospitals to provide more personalised and proactive care, resulting in improved health outcomes and higher patient satisfaction.

Case study:
Why is patient journey mapping important?

Patient Journey specialises in helping hospitals define their patient journey and connect patients with the right information at the right time. While patient journey mapping can be applied to any treatment, in this example we focus on the importance of patient journey mapping during postoperative care after knee replacement surgery.

As with many clinics, we found that that this orthopedic clinic was struggling with a breakdown in communication and understanding between patients and doctors. Information was not being retained, costly mistakes were being made, and patients had a high level of anxiety about their procedure. After reading through the standard brochures and information on the hospital's website, we asked the orthopedic surgeons, physiotherapists and specialised nurses to educate us on the type of information that patients receive when they are discharged from the hospital.

We accumulated seven pages of education about pain management, exercises, daily activities, complications, and much more that patients needed to know after surgery. Seeing these pages of information, education, exercises and guidelines was quite daunting, even to the team of healthcare professionals. While it was all highly relevant, combined it was quite an overwhelming overview.

After collecting all of the information from the hospital's perspective, we interviewed a number of patients who had recently undergone their knee replacement. They added their perspectives to the journey as well, bringing up concerns about sudden colouring of the wound, neuropathic pain and side effects of the pain killers. They also pointed out practical advice such as raising the toilet seat and using a walker in house to make it easier to get around than using crutches.

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The final step was to structure this information along the timeline of the patient journey in our app, making sure they received relevant instruction at the right time. To enhance the information, we discussed the use of videos for more complex information such as exercises, lowering of pain medication and changing of bandages. We ended up distributing the app and delivering patients 30 notifications with aftercare instruction in the first four weeks after surgery. Everyone in the project was amazed by the positive results that came from understanding what patients need to know and when they need to know it and delivering that information in an easy to consume way. Improving the clinic's patient journey mapping has led to improved quality of life, functional outcomes, pain management and satisfaction.



The stakeholders

Like any great project, patient mapping begins with involving the right people. It is important that these stakeholders participate in the process every step of the way to ensure the right information is collected and changes are upheld. Stakeholders in the patient mapping process are:

Patients
Patients can be included in focus groups to provide feedback and steer your mapping process.

Medical team
Doctors, nurses, therapists and other medical personnel involved in any stage of the treatment.

Third party
This third-party stakeholder takes a moderator role and helps guide the mapping sessions and process. An example of this is our digital solution Patient Journey.

It's important to remember that for the mapping process to be effective, every stakeholder must be present and involved in the mapping sessions. Without feedback from everyone involved throughout the process, the patient journey will not accurately reflect the needs of the hospital or their patients.

Mapping the patient journey

The whole process of patient journey mapping takes between 4 and 8 weeks, depending on the ability of the stakeholders to arrange their schedules.

Preparation for patient journey mapping includes the following:

1. **Define the treatment you want to map**
   Decide what particular treatment you'd like to map. It's recommended that you begin with a straightforward treatment that follows a pre-op, operation, post-op, recovery timeline. After you get the hang of it, more complex treatments can be mapped.

2. **Define the steps of the treatment**
   From a medical perspective, what steps do patients go through and what information should be communicated at what time?

3. **Identify touchpoints**
   Touchpoints can be digital or physical including any interaction with staff, friends and family, or non-human touchpoints like apps and medical devices.

4. **Apply a patient perspective**
   Determine how the patient is experiencing the steps in their treatment. Are they getting information they understand at a time that makes sense?

5. **Identify issues**
   Identify areas in the journey that are less than efficient. You will immediately be able to see the touchpoints and phases that don't satisfy patient needs.

Your patient journey can be mapped in as little as two sessions. It is vital to the success of the project that all stakeholders involved are physically present to ensure that the journey accurately represents the needs of those using it.

Your mapping sessions should include the following:

Session 1

- Conceptualise the patient journey.
- Understand the flow of patients and how it intertwines with the workflow of the medical staff.
- Determine what information is vital to what touchpoints.

Session 2

- Involve patient focus groups to provide feedback on your proposed patient journey.
- Using the feedback, finalise the patient journey so that it satisfies patient and doctor needs.

The goal of this process is to gain a holistic view of patient care, providing relevant information for the patient as well as aligning patient and hospital workflows. Too often hospitals tend to think for the patient rather than about them. By taking this time to collect real feedback from patients and doctors, you can identify weaknesses in your current patient flow and build a better experience for everyone involved.

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Tips & tricks for mapping your patient journey

Mapping your patient journey doesn't have to be hard. Patient Journey has helped over a hundred hospitals better understand the patient experience and improve patient adherence. Below we have collected a few tips and tricks that can help make your first mapping process run a bit smoother:

Take on the patient perspective

Analyse the experience from the patient's perspective. If you just received a life changing diagnosis, large amounts of information may be difficult to process. What information does the patient need to stay informed and what is unnecessary? When is the best time to receive this information?

Limit the amount of text and medical jargon

Limit the amount of medical jargon and text that you use so that patients can understand easily. Only communicate the information that is relevant to patients and their treatment.

Make use of images

Not only do images make information more attractive, but they can also be an excellent tool in demonstrating a difficult subject.

Use videos to introduce the team or illustrate exercise

Video immediately makes information more personable and can give the patients a real sense of your hospital before even stepping foot in the door. Patients are able to see the operating room and other areas that are not usually seen before surgery, reducing anxiety about the treatment overall. It also helps patients with low health literacy understand and process information better. It's also helpful to include videos of exercises instead of pictures.



Share practical tips to engage patients after discharge

The care doesn't stop once the patient leaves the hospital. Use touchpoints such as an app to keep up with patients' home recovery by providing information and maintaining engagement.

Continuing to map & improve patient experience

Patient journey mapping is not a one-off activity. In order to get the most out of this process, it's important to continuously improve upon and update it on a regular basis. There are a few ways you can integrate continuous improvement into your workflow after the mapping process is complete.

Patient focus groups

One way to do this is to regularly test your journeys in patient focus groups of 3-5 people. Run through the full journey with the group and collect feedback. Assess the groups perception of the information they got from the hospital. What was the most important information they received? What was missing?

Yearly mapping sessions

Once you've put the time and effort into perfecting your patient journey, you want it to stay relevant. This is why it's important to host yearly mapping sessions with all stakeholders involved. Like the original mapping sessions, spend time understanding your patient flow, collecting feedback, and adjusting touchpoints to perfectly fit patient and doctor needs.

In both of these instances it's vital to continuously involve patients in the process. Patients bring a new perspective to your hospital and can help you identify blind spots that you yourself may not recognise.

"Patient Journey has helped over a hundred hospitals better understand the patient experience and improve patient adherence."

Process of patient journey mapping

Involve right stakeholders

Patients

Medical team

Third party

Map your patient journey

I. Define the treatment you want to map
Decide what treatment you want to map the patient journey form start to finish.

II. Define the steps
What steps do patients go through and what information should be communicated at what time?

III. Identify touchpoints
Touchpoints can be digital or physical interactions between the hospital and the patient.

IV. Apply a patient perspective
How are the patients experiencing the hospital? What information is most relevant at what time?

V. Identify possible issues
Identify areas in the journey that are less efficient and leave patients confused or frustrated.

Mapping sessions

All stakeholders must be present

Session 1

- Conceptualise journey
- Understand patient flow
- Determine touchpoints

Session 2

- Involve patient focus groups
- Finalise journey using feedback

Continiously improve

Patient journey mapping is not a one off activity

Collect feedback

Improve patient journey

Common questions about patient journey mapping

As patient journey mapping experts, we have helped many hospitals build and implement effective patient journeys. Here are a few common questions that we've received on the process:

Q We've already established patient pathways and understand what our patients want, why would we put effort into patient mapping?

A Many hospitals believe they understand their patients' needs when they enter treatment. In our experience however, hospitals tend to think for rather than about the patient. While the medical team might prioritise sharing information about possible complications, pain management, and rehab exercises, they might leave out information that patients may find more valuable to recovery such as how to care for pets, when they can return to normal activities, and how to cope with the mental stress an operation causes. The point is, you can't know what your patients want to know and when they want to know it without understanding their journey through your hospital.

Q We're already so busy, what if we can't find extra time to map our patient journeys?

A When organised correctly, patient journey mapping can be done with little impact on work time. The process usually takes 4 to 8 weeks from start to finish and will help your hospital run with much more speed, saving you time in the future.

Q We've already aligned on our communications a while ago, what if we have nothing to map?

A Things change over time. Even once you have gone through the patient mapping process, it's recommended to realign every year to ensure all information is correct and patients flow nicely through the hospital. Even if you think you're aligned, there is always room to optimise patient experience.

Q Scheduling all stakeholders for the mapping sessions is proving difficult, is it possible to do the mapping sessions individually or remotely?

A Unfortunately, this is one of the most common mistakes that we see hospitals make. When the mapping sessions are done remotely with people working individually and not collaborating with each other, we see an increase in the time and confusion in the mapping process. With every stakeholder coming up with their own solution and finding a happy medium becomes next to impossible. That is why we recommend every stakeholder be present and involved in the mapping process to improve the communication and decision-making process.

Patient Journey in patient journey mapping

Patient Journey is a widely used, easy to implement digital patient mapping tool. Our app provides features to improve patient support, interaction and adherence.

Patient Journey connects patients with their treatments through an interactive timeline. The timeline is built up in phases such as pre-op, operation, and recovery which are broken down in bitesize snippets of information delivered to patients at the exact time it is most relevant.

How Patient Journey can help you map the patient journey:

- Making the patient journey map visible and easy to understand for the user.
- Guiding patients by asking questions on mental state, pain levels and improving patients‘ knowledge for shared decision making.
- Push notifications to emphasise important information or remind patients.
- Helping patients to prepare better for treatments following the BIBO (better in, better out) principle.
- Videos to remove anxiety, explain exercises better and thus creating better outcomes.
- Providing accurate information and motivation for the revalidation phase, lowering readmission rates.

About Enovation

The Enovation Platform is the leading platform for connected care. Our software supports digital care and collaboration throughout the patient journey. This gives (healthcare) organisations all the tools they need to function as one well-oiled multidisciplinary network, close to the client.

Is your organisation ready to take the next step in digitalisation? Or would you like to know more about implementing digital solutions? We would be happy to tell you more about the possibilities and how you can approach this.

To contact us check out our website

www.enovationgroup.com

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