



Building Your Connected Point of Care Ecosystem

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One of the biggest changes occurring in healthcare is the *pace* of change itself. In prior years, change occurred at a manageable pace that enabled organizations to adapt over time. Today, it has accelerated. Rapid innovation is imperative for realizing a better care experience and better outcomes.

There is extreme pressure on healthcare organizations, including podiatry practices, to be at the forefront of this change. Nowhere is this more evident than with the race to provide greater connectivity in ambulatory care. Much of this has been driven by the consumerization of healthcare. Patients are demanding to be connected with their healthcare in the same way they are connected within other aspects of their lives.

Look no further than fitness tracking devices or apps that help patients manage their chronic conditions or communicate directly with caregivers. However, as with any new trend or development, there are a lot of questions and confusion around where to begin.

New technology is helping create a fully connected digital ecosystem that brings together every aspect of the point of care to eliminate barriers and inefficien-

cies by integrating processes, equipment and people. This connected point of care ecosystem can help ensure a more satisfying and seamless experience for patients and caregivers by providing a platform where organizations can leverage new technologies,

better and not make things worse. Most importantly, the technology needs to help enhance the quality of care delivered without negatively impacting either the patient-caregiver interaction or the care experience.

Before embarking on any con-

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incorporate best practices and employ greater standardization. Ultimately, the goal is to improve the quality of care delivered and outcomes achieved.

Of course, no one is advocating “technology for technology’s sake.” The technology needs to provide real value and be tailored to the clinical environment. It needs to make things

structure project, it is always a good idea to have a set of blueprints or a detailed plan to guide progress and ensure alignment with objectives. Building a connected point of care ecosystem within your podiatry practice should be no different.

Following are five steps podiatry practices can take to assess where they are in the journey and develop a framework to achieve a connected point of care ecosystem.

1) Identify and Define Your Point of Care Ecosystem

The point of care ecosystem can encompass everything that happens within your podiatry practice, as well as patient touch points occurring outside this environment. This includes any interac-

Continued on page 118





Ecosystem (from page 117)

tions, equipment, room layout, technology and processes. Every ecosystem is different and complex, so it's important your care team agrees on the components and actions that comprise your ecosystem.

Begin by listing all the pieces and parts of your point of care ecosystem, with input and approval from your care team. Once the list is complete, study the activities and work being done within that ecosystem. Identify stakeholders and caregivers who have responsibilities at the point of care and determine their roles. Once the list is complete, you and your team can then use it to identify priorities, concerns and immediate opportunities.

2) Establish Benchmarks for Success

The good news is that yours is not the only podiatry practice journeying toward a connected ecosystem. Some practices are further along the journey than others. This is an opportunity to gather industry information that can help you understand approaches and strategies that are working. There are a variety of sources for benchmark data, case studies and best practices. A good place to start is with your vendor. In some cases, they can even provide valuable counsel throughout this entire journey.

Once you've gathered industry benchmarks and best practices, you are ready to build on the information gathered in Step 1 and look further inward. Identify pain points, inconsistencies and waste occurring within your point of care ecosystem. Discuss aspirations for your facility and ecosystem with your care team, and then prioritize focus areas for action.

3) Conduct an Assessment of Your Ecosystem

An assessment of your ecosystem will help you understand its current state and "health," providing a starting point to help you find the best path forward. When beginning your assessment, it helps to think of the ecosystem as a set of concentric circles with the point of care in the center.

Start at the center of the circle (point of care) and work your way out

as necessary. Talk with patients and clinicians about their experience. How do they think the space is performing? What's important to them, and why? What do they think is working, or not working? What are the main areas that need to be addressed? Next, take a look at the equipment, technology, processes and workflows being used in your ecosystem to determine what is working, what needs to evolve or what is missing.

Once you have gathered this information, follow patients and caregivers as they move through your

- Implement a standardized approach that enables development of clinical protocols that reduce human variables and drive better outcomes.

- Increase efficiency by identifying opportunities to enhance and improve processes and workflows.

- Enhance patient-caregiver interaction by making informed decisions and delivering a patient-centered experience at every encounter.

5) Make Changes as Needed

Now that you have your framework for your connected digital eco-

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ecosystem to see how actual experiences vary from perception. Are processes/workflows being followed? How do caregivers interact with patients and technology? Are there connectivity issues? Are there patient bottlenecks? Are there accessibility issues with the rooms or facility?

Finally, share the assessment results with your care teams for feedback. This time can also be used to educate them on the state of your ecosystem and get their buy-in and support on possible needed changes uncovered by the assessment. You can also identify stakeholders to play a role in developing goals and overseeing initiatives.

4) Set Realistic and Measurable Goals

It is now time to create realistic, measurable goals that will bring you closer to a fully connected point of care ecosystem—and the steps needed to achieve those goals. Decide what overall strategy best fits your ecosystem and frame your goals around themes like supporting the move to value-based care, enhancing patient-caregiver interaction, realizing better outcomes or even improving patient and caregiver experiences.

For instance, possible goals could include:

- Gain better understanding of existing processes to make data-driven business decisions that will ultimately enhance patient care.

system journey, use it as a guide to monitor progress as you identify opportunities, test potential solutions, analyze results and implement successful solutions. Evaluate data to identify the level of success or barriers that need to be addressed. Revisit assessment results and goals on a periodic basis to ensure you and your care teams are staying on the predetermined path.

It is also important to continue the dialog you started with patients and caregivers during Step 3. Periodically check back with them to see how they perceive the journey progressing. Give them an opportunity to share experiences, concerns and feedback.

The journey to build a fully connected point of care ecosystem may seem like a daunting task, but with the right framework in place, a clear path can be identified. By better understanding the current state of your podiatry practice, you can envision a realistic roadmap for creating a fully connected digital ecosystem to improve quality of care and outcomes. **PM**



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