



Improving the Patient Experience

Welcome to the next frontier in healthcare.

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Practice Management Pearls is a regular feature that focuses on practice management issues presented by successful DPMs who are members of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management. The AAPPM has a forty-plus year history of providing its member DPMs with practice management education and resources. Visit www.aappm.org for more information.

Trying to understand what drives the choice-making for healthcare consumers is complex. Exploring these choices can be complicated, and will differ greatly from the consumer experience in other industries. But as the healthcare industry continues to shift from volume to value, and as consumers take a more active role in managing their healthcare, the need to understand what matters most to them is more important than ever.

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being hailed as "the next frontier in healthcare."

Health system leaders know, better than anyone, that consumers are demanding more from their providers. Sure, they want excellent care

Increased convenience certainly can be facilitated at the point of patients' scheduling, intake, and the discussion and scheduling of follow-up testing. However, while this process remains largely manual

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and service, but more than ever healthcare consumers want—among other things—care delivered with more ease, convenience, and comprehensiveness.

To thrive under these consumerist pressures, we as podiatric physicians must continuously innovate and offer more for our patients than just expertise. We must continue to maximize the patient experience and continue to uncover the data to drive their decision-making.¹

today, despite significant investment in health IT, expanding the digital connection to providers will enhance convenience and personalization for the healthcare consumer.

Research more than ever indicates that the engaged healthcare consumer is more proactive about their care management and cost considerations. Therefore, consumers are increasingly expecting more out of the services they receive from their

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providers. While digital tools are not yet the highest priority or concern of healthcare consumers, as evidenced in recent Deloitte studies, their usage will be vital to the future of consumerism.^{2,6} Engaged consumers desire greater levels of self-service, access to information, greater choice and, more than ever, consumers want convenience, comprehensiveness, and more value for their hard-earned healthcare dollar.

How Do We As Podiatric Physicians Deliver?

A) Develop more in-office ancillary services that will meet the needs of the entire scope of the lower extremity. Vascular testing, pathology, wound care, imaging, footwear, bracing, therapy. Not only do these services make sense financially, but they also provide exactly what customers want... convenience and comprehensiveness.

B) Want more time with your patients while still earning more revenue? Hire a scribe. While there are many ways of implementing this service, the best approach would be hiring or promoting someone from your nursing staff to this position. We have seen the use of scribes for over a decade with amazing results. Studies continue to demonstrate that the number one preferred interaction is having a doctor or other healthcare provider spend sufficient time with the patient and not rushing through exams.

C) Offer comprehensive services to your diabetic patients. When it comes to our ever-growing diabetic population, this concept is more important than ever. The following is a quick list of services that you should consider offering the diabetic healthcare consumer under your roof.

1) *In-office wound care product dispensing.* Using the Amerx Wound Kits (Helix collagen, foams, alginates, etc.) has for years enabled our wound care patients to be more involved in their healthcare while helping to heal their wounds faster. Not only does wound care product dispensing reimburse phenomenal revenues annually, but

wounds also heal faster with significantly higher patient satisfaction. Don't inconvenience your patients by sending them somewhere else for their supplies. Moreover, stop letting that considerable revenue walk out of your office.

2) *In-office vascular testing.* There are many compliant tools on the market, but this service is fundamental for excellent diabetic foot care. Make

sure that the testing device you use is compliant with your local carrier determination guidelines. These tests can NOT be billed for the purpose of screening.

3) *Diabetic footwear/orthotics/bracing.* Diabetic patients should not be sent to someone far less qualified to measure and dispense footwear, but unfortunately, the number of podiatric physicians either discontinuing this service or referring out is increasing. This is exactly what healthcare consumers DO NOT WANT. If you have had challenges in billing/audits or with staff training, attend a practice management course (www.aappm.org) or seek out mentorship. The revenue you are losing (along with patients) won't enable growth for your practice in the future, especially with the massive amount of consolidation happening in our profession.

4) *Adding scribe/documentation services to your team will allow you more time in the room and less time staring into a computer screen.* Patients want our time and attention more than anything else.

The industry's shift from volume to value as consumers become more engaged in managing their health must drive how we grow and strategically enhance our practices. When it comes to managing our diabetic patients, for instance, provid-

ing a comprehensive list of services is fundamental for growth and survival in healthcare. Podiatric providers are confronted with many incremental burdens in the evolution of the engaged consumer—it is our job as podiatric providers to find new and exciting ways to enhance the patient experience by becoming more comprehensive in what we

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References

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- ⁴ Deloitte 2015 Global Mobile Consumer Survey: US Edition—The rise of the always-connected
- ⁵ Deloitte Center for Health Solutions 2015 Survey of US Healthcare Consumers: Healthcare consumer engagement: No "one-size-fits-all" approach
- ⁶ Deloitte Center for Health Solutions 2012 Survey of US Healthcare Consumers: Five-year look back



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