Power to the Patient
By Aspect and Healthcare Intelligence

Today’s healthcare goals seem simple – improve patient satisfaction, deliver high-quality experiences, and increase staff engagement. Doctors and patients alike are accustomed to the firmly entrenched doctor knows best status quo. But it is only by empowering patients – entrusting them with greater responsibility and putting opportunities for self-directed care into their hands – that health care can be made significantly more efficient and effective.

How can health systems create a culture of patient empowerment? In looking at industries like banking, retail and travel, it’s clear that the growth of self-service technology has played a critical role in consumer empowerment. By allowing consumers to manage routine interactions at the time and place that is most convenient to them, self-service is a ‘must have’ for organizations looking to build loyalty and drive satisfaction. Healthcare providers are following suit by allowing patients to perform a number of tasks self-registering on site, pre-registering paying bills on line and communicating via mobile devices. Who doesn’t want to be able to control their healthcare journey?

In an increasingly competitive environments, health systems need to be able to differentiate their services and build patient loyalty. Self-service tools are becoming a key component to increasing the patient experience. But beyond the patient experience, self-service tools simply make good business sense. Many health systems are finding that self-service tools have a positive impact on operations by reducing registration errors, more efficient use of staff and improved cash flow.

Patient Focus
Patients don’t interact with their providers by choice. They are sick or need to contact a provider on behalf of a friend or family member. Self-service tools help make these encounters count. A patient or family member can begin their encounter before they step foot in a facility through a portal, by completing pre-registration documentation, appointment scheduling and pre-registration. Patients can complete these processes in the comfort of their home or office, not in the noisy, pressured environment of a typical hospital or clinic.

When patients arrive at the facility, they can use functional, easy-to-use self-service registration kiosks and tablet PCs to complete the registration process. Patients use the tablet PCs when they arrive to validate pre-populated forms, and all they simply need to do is validate their information to complete the check-in process. Patients benefit because they are able to skip long lines, creating faster access and a better experience. Health systems keep costs down by being able to more efficiently process more patients with the same staffing levels. Patients also benefit from self-service kiosks within a facility. If they have questions about how to find their doctor or lab, they can pull up campus maps with point to point instructions on how to locate their provider and not miss a critical appointment.

As health systems strive to achieve Healthcare’s ‘Triple Aim’, self-service technology not only more effectively and efficiently address routine processes but also creates an environment where clinicians and staff can focus on patients.

But the need for patient engagement – where the patient is encouraged to take an active role as a key player in protecting their health, choosing appropriate treatments for episodes of ill health and managing chronic disease – is often ignored.

- World Health Organization, 2013
Continued Engagement

Just because a patient walks out the door with a diagnosis, it doesn’t mean that their healthcare journey is over. Depending on their prognosis, patients may continue to interact with your health system for several weeks, months or even years to execute their care plan and pay their bills. Patients and their family members expect the same streamlined process for scheduling follow up appointments and payment remittance as they do in other activities in their lives. In fact, Firstserv in 2012 conducted a billing and payment trends survey. Of those who responded, 72.5 million households use online banking and 36.4 million households use online bill payment. Why then do health systems expect anything different from their patients?

Self-service kiosks and mobile technologies provide patients that prefer to interact with their provider via self-service channels. Give patients the ability to view account balances, enroll in payment plans and pay bills quickly through their method of choice. Let patients opt-in to receive appointment reminders, test results or other messages as text alerts on their mobile phones. By empowering patients with a greater sense of control over how, when and where they receive their information not only increases patient satisfaction, but loyalty for on-the-go healthcare consumers.

Sustainable Loyalty

Creating patient loyalty is about more than providing a reward for staying with a particular healthcare facility. Bottom line, it’s about making it easy for patients to interact with your health system. What exactly does “make it easy” mean? According to the Harvard Business Review, it’s simply about removing obstacles. Several recurring complaints about service interactions focus specifically on patient effort.

• Contacting their doctor or clinician repeatedly (or be transferred) to get an issue resolved
• Repeating information
• Switching from one service channel to another (for instance, needing to call after trying unsuccessfully to solve a problem through the website)

Empowering patients with self-service tools helps to facilitate a positive patient experience by reducing patient effort at each step in the patient’s journey - from online scheduling and automated check-in to wayfinding kiosks and mobile bill pay. Aside from saving patients valuable time, self-service creates more meaningful interactions and personalized experience. A massive shift is under way in terms of patient service preferences. Although most health systems believe that customers overwhelmingly prefer live phone service to self-service, Harvard Business Review’s most recent data show that patients are, in fact, indifferent. This is an important tipping point and puts into question the use of phone-based service as the primary channel for patient interactions. For clinicians it presents an opportunity to rebuild patient processes and loyalty around self-service and put reducing patient effort firmly at the core, where it belongs.

Aspect Can Help

Today, healthcare consumers are over scheduled and overwhelmed. Gone are the days where patients had time to speak to front-end hospital staff to manage appointments, request prescription refills, coordinate care or pay medical bills. As patient demand for self-service grows, health systems are realizing that to foster patient engagement and loyalty across the care continuum, they are increasingly offering do-it-yourself convenience. In fact, according to NCR, 33 percent of study respondents would like to schedule an appointment online or pay their bills, but only 9 percent said their provider offered this option.

Patients want to be empowered to control their healthcare through their choice of self-service options. Aspect Healthcare Solutions, such as patient portals, mobile apps and self-service kiosks help make it easier for patients to interact you’re your healthcare system – creating superior patient experience and loyalty.

Patient Portals

Full-service web portals are an increasingly prominent element of many practices Meaningful Use initiatives. According to a 2012 survey published in Government Technology Magazine, 47 percent of respondents stated...
Patients can see a lot more than they ever saw before. It (web portals) helps them understand the role they’re playing in their own healthcare.

- Excela Health, 2015

Coordinating care requires convenient access to data that can be shared securely within a health system or across an entire community. Research shows that patient portals enhance communication and improve doctor and medical staff productivity (Vecchione, 2012). Aspect and Microsoft have partnered to provide healthcare portals that connect patients directly with their clinical providers’ departments or offices and manage health specific information. Even before their appointments, patients are able to complete their pre-encounter medical forms in the quiet and comfort of their own home instead of in a stressful waiting room – leading to increased patient satisfaction. They can track their proactive health progress which increases motivation to improve. Patients can easily and securely receive and respond to any alerts or reminders sent by their physicians. Whether it's accessing personalized health content and test results or communicating with members of a care team, engaging patients and their families online with meaningful self-service options can improve the patient’s outcomes, respond to issues more quickly, and deliver higher quality care at a lower overall cost.

Going Mobile

As mobile devices have become widespread, self-service has grown from simple interactive voice response (IVR) applications to a robust ecosystem of ways for patients to access information, including SMS, mobile web applications or social media. With Aspect, it’s easy to implement personalized self-service that gets patients a first-contact resolution – freeing up your contact center staff to address more complex problems. Easily enable your health system to enhance patient engagement and increase satisfaction and loyalty with communication touch points that address patient preferences while making information access faster and more ubiquitous.

Providing patients with options that fit their needs and preferences increases self-service adoption and automation rates so that fewer patients require staff assistance. Additionally, proactive outbound messaging offers a highly effective way to pre-empt spikes in inbound call volume related to situations such as back to school appointment setting. Utilize outbound notifications to deliver actionable reminders that enable patients to perform transactions such as confirm a scheduled appointment or pay a past-due bill – including an interactive IVR or SMS dialogue or link to a mobile web application that makes it easy for patients to take action. Integrate with our available APIs to utilize voice biometrics, location-based services and more to make processes like validation and verification even more seamless. Empower your patients to take more control through mobile self-service technology.

Self-Service Kiosks

As other industries provide more self-service options, healthcare consumers are increasingly taking note of these slow, inefficient procedures for registering, making appointments, confirming appointments and paying bills. Aspect can help you create customized onsite self-service kiosks that can be integrated with almost any hospital information management system, providing access, efficient patient registration and information access and cash flow.

24/7 Access

With the option for online access, Self-Service Kiosks provide patients with the ability to make appointment requests and complete pre-registration information. Patients can also check scheduled appointments, review pre and post-care instructions and make account information requests.

Registration

The improved patient experience starts with registration. Patients can view and verify their demographic information, confirm insurance policy details and update information. In addition, patients can review and sign HIPAA consent forms. Staff is freed up to handle more patients, creating greater access that is cost effective and efficient.

Increased Meaningful Use

Healthcare providers are struggling to comply with the definition of meaningful use for electronic health records. IMR Healthcare provides the solution to achieve interoperability of all the clinical systems in a healthcare setting, regardless of what EMR is in place.
**Improved Cash Flow**

Self-Service Kiosks help strengthen cash flow with online payments. The same insurance information patients update online not only speeds registration, it also speeds the revenue cycle. With the most current information available, billing and business offices start off with everything they need to get the revenue cycle going quickly.

Self-Service Kiosks also speed up bill payment. It gives patients the power to review and pay bills online. That means your healthcare organization eliminates the delays of mailing payments or calling with questions. Patients can submit payments faster and your organization can process them faster, too, making cash flow stronger.

**Engaged Patients**

With online results from your lab system, patients can look at lab results (after clinical personnel have reviewed them). They can also view and update information such as allergies, medications, recent surgery information and diagnoses. Physicians can use it to make decisions that are more informed, and ultimately, it can improve patient safety.

Another feature allows authorized users to assist in the care of their family members online. They can request appointments, update information, pay bills, etc., for family members, as well as for themselves, from one login. That way, caregivers can more easily access information for family members and play a bigger role in their care.

**Improve Patient Care**

With a Self-Service Kiosk, visits are spent on patient care, not repetitive processing chores. To patients, your healthcare organization is more convenient and ahead of the curve. For staff, they deal with fewer phone calls and handle more patients in less time. You are able to improve the patient experience with a more engaged care team that costs less to operate.

**Power to Your Patients**

According to The Breakaway Group, ‘Providers are no longer viewed as the sole investigator and lone decision maker… For many patients, being able to access their own information and results is now an expectation and in some cases a necessity to save lives’.

Patients need the power to become members of their own care team. There are a significant number of patients interacting with your health system right now. Are you advocating for them to be good healthcare consumers or, are you quietly accepting your status quo? This is a huge problem because their care and experience depends on how empowered they feel to take control of their own healthcare. The challenge is meeting and then exceeding their expectations. The one thing you can count on is that if you aren’t allowing your patients to interact with you in a manner they choose to, your competitors are. Aspect can help you create the experiences your patients deserve.

Power to your patients!