Two-Way Texting for Independent Pharmacies

HOW TO ACHIEVE ADHERENCE METRICS & DRIVE BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

JULY 2017
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How to Meet Adherence Metrics & Drive Better Health Outcomes, July 2017

About this Document

Communication has always been critical to patient care. Now, conversations between patients and health providers are shifting to new channels as technologies and industry regulations change and evolve.

Two-way text messaging gives independent pharmacists a competitive edge in patient communication while helping them achieve critical adherence metrics. Zipwhip’s two-way business texting software is a proven, effective, and affordable tool that meets industry standards while delivering the highest level of customer service and patient care.

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A Crucible for Pharmacies

When patients don’t pick up the phone, it’s almost impossible to get a script in their hands.

Pharmacies are the front lines of healthcare. As insurance companies seek to reduce costs and control health outcomes, small pharmacies are squeezed by new requirements, higher costs, and limited time. In this hyper-competitive landscape, independent pharmacies need new tools and strategies to stand out and survive.

Challenges for all pharmacies, but especially independents

Pay-for-performance metrics that insurance companies require for clinical interventions have driven sharp increases in direct and indirect fees, which are hitting all pharmacies hard. Large retail chains have the brand recognition, mass buying power, multi-location appeal, 24/7 access, and expensive software systems to support or overcome PBM barriers. Independent pharmacist owners don’t have those advantages.

To make matters worse, pay-for-performance adherence metrics don’t scale well to smaller, local pharmacy practice models and are difficult for independents to track and manage. Insurance companies use adherence metrics to measure pharmacy performance and eligibility. Prescription fill ratios are a major factor in whether pharmacies can participate in network groups. When patients don’t pick up the phone, it’s almost impossible to get a script into their hands.

Pharmacists need time to focus on what matters—patients

Strong pharmacist-patient relationships drive clinical interventions and lower costs. Ironically, the time pharmacists spend dealing with insurance companies to fill prescriptions takes away from the time needed for quality patient interactions.

Independents are not only counseling their patients and filling prescriptions. They are operating small businesses with employees, payroll, marketing, and other challenges to juggle. On top of struggling to meet a metric system that is misaligned with their business model, depleting margins limit options for costly tools or additional staff.

New two-way texting technologies improve fill ratios and drive clinical interventions. Most importantly, two-way texting lets independent pharmacists hang up the phone and actually get their time back to focus on serving and healing patients.

Send

Hello! As we discussed today, you should be taking two pills daily with food for the next 10 days. Remember nausea is normal during the first few days, and you can take Tums to help. Please text us if you have any questions!
Communication is Key

The modern, connected pharmacist needs to reach a high number of patients efficiently and actually connect with those patients.

Pharmacies that want to combat DIR fees and compete through niche services must also offer clinical services. According to NACDS, clinical services share two common requirements: high-quality patient interaction and stellar customer service.

Quality interaction and customer service are nearly impossible to achieve without an easily accessible, cost-effective patient-pharmacist communication platform. Two-way texting offers an ideal, widely preferred channel for pharmacy-patient communications.

Tackle Non-Adherence Proactively

According to Patient Medication Adherence: Measures in Daily Practice, the #1 barrier to effective use of medication is poor provider-patient communication.

- Over 60 percent of patients misunderstood the directions regarding prescribed information
- 40 to 60 percent of patients could not correctly report what their care provider expected of them 10 to 80 minutes later

Pharmacists can easily break this cycle by sending personal text messages after reviewing new medications with a patient. A simple call-to-action at the appropriate time, at the start of treatment, can prevent costly adverse drug events from ever happening.

Strengthen Patient-Pharmacist Relationships

Texting strengthens the sense of personal connection between patient and pharmacist, and it is the preferred communication channel for many patients. In fact, 98 percent of text messages are opened and read within two minutes. Compared with voicemails, text messages are 7x more likely to receive a response.

Adding two-way text messaging as a highly effective communication channel is a clear opportunity to save time and increase patient engagement. The organic conversational exchange in today’s text message driven landscape is already building stronger, more authentic pharmacy-patient relationships.

Get Your Time Back

What if you could replace 50 individual phone calls with a single text message? How much time would you save?

Now multiply that across your entire team. Texting saves independent pharmacy teams a lot of time.

Allowing staff pharmacists and supporting technicians to focus on clinical services is vital to a store’s success. For example, prescription errors can be found and corrected 89 percent of the time during MTM or individual consultations. By arming your team with simple tools that allow your team to work more efficiently, you drive better patient outcomes and increase job satisfaction.
Myths & Misconceptions

The magic of two-way texting is in opening a new communication option so patients have a choice whether to text or call you.

Many pharmacies don’t understand the benefits of business texting. Here are a few of the top myths and misconceptions about business texting for pharmacies.

Pharmacy Systems Already Have Text Reminders Built In

Can you imagine a phone service that let you place a call and speak, but then wouldn’t allow the person on the other end of the line to say anything back? Instead, they would be forced to listen to you, hang up, and dial a different number to ask you a question.

This is essentially the experience that many built-in texting alerts provide. The texting tools built into existing softwares let pharmacies send alerts, but patients can’t respond. One-way texting doesn’t help independent pharmacies improve adherence. The magic of two-way texting is in opening a new communication option so patients have a choice whether to text or call you.

Older Patients Don’t Want to Text

Surveys show that preferences are changing, and consumers across all age groups and demographics choose text messages instead of phone calls.

- The 45 to 65 year-old age group is the fastest-growing demographic of mobile users and texters
- 94 percent of 70+ year-old smart phone users are text messaging on a weekly basis
- 93.5 percent of older consumers prefer text reminders for taking medication

“How my older patients thought they could call the number my automated refill system sends a text reminder from, but that phone number can’t receive messages! So then they would get confused and not know how to talk to us on the phone after we had texted them.”

– Gunnison RX

Healthy Young Patients Don’t Need Help with Adherence

Patients under 50 years old score significantly lower on the adherence scale. And, the single strongest predictor of prescription medication adherence is “a feeling of connectedness with the pharmacy.”

How does a pharmacy facilitate that feeling of connectedness to engage a younger, less adherent population? Especially for pharmacies that offer delivery or mail order services, overcoming the not-in-person disconnect is critical. Pharmacies should offer text messaging for everyone, but especially for younger, less-adherent patients. Consider the three chronic disease categories CMS ratings target for adherence:

1. Hypertension or High Blood Pressure affects 1/3 of adults 18 and over. With heightened awareness around health, the number of people who are taking medications to treat HTN has also increased from 27.6 percent in 1999 to 2000 to 49.1 percent in 2007 to 2008.

2. High Cholesterol is aggressive in the 20-59 population, with 8% taking lipid lowering agents. According to JAMA, 1/3 of the people eligible for statins are not getting them. Patients under 40 are less likely to be prescribed a statin until after they have been diagnosed with heart disease. The independent pharmacy community has an opportunity to cater to this unpredictable and traditionally non-adherent group.

3. Oral Diabetes has had alarming growth for youth under 20, new type 2 diagnoses rapidly growing at 5% a year as of 2012. Meanwhile, adults ages 40-59 comprise the world’s age group with the highest diabetes rates, hardly a group that should be disqualified as ‘too old for texting’.
Zipwhip: True Two-Way Texting

Zipwhip’s simple, non-invasive web applications add two-way texting to any existing landline or VoIP phone number. We’re changing the entire pharmacy industry’s ability to provide cost-effective clinical services.

CASE STUDY

Med Shoppe Pharmacy

Med Shoppe Pharmacy-Sherman and Denison owner, Jana Bennett, speaks of her experience using texting as a communication solution.

We are using Zipwhip at our two stores to help further differentiate ourselves from the competition. We initially thought we would use Zipwhip to more easily reach out to our patients to let them know of any problems we might be having with their prescription such as being out of stock on their medication or waiting on a prior authorization. However, we are finding many other uses as well!

We use Zipwhip to check on our patients in our medication synchronization program before we fill their meds each month. We use it as a final reminder for patients to pick up their meds before they are returned to stock (with a more personalized message after our pharmacy system has already attempted to reach them).

What I really love about Zipwhip is that all of my employees are able to access it from their desktops. This empowers them to take ownership of various problems throughout the day and really allows them to engage with our patients on a whole new level. I think that over time this is really going to increase job satisfaction and allow for a new level of customer service that we have never been able to offer before.
Adoption of texting by independent pharmacies will lead to more time to complete daily operational tasks, higher engagement from patients, and a greater patient-pharmacist connection. Ultimately, Zipwhip texting applications will empower independent pharmacies with a competitive edge when appealing to patients and the tools required to achieve greater adherence outcomes in their patient populations.

Conclusion

Strong patient-pharmacist communication is central to optimizing patient adherence which requires patient engagement. Zipwhip’s unique capability of text activating your landline creates a quick and natural channel for patients to access you the way they choose to and always with an option to text or call. The cloud based apps built for multiple-users will increase efficiency among your pharmacy staff by decreasing hours spent on the phone.

Zipwhip’s feature-rich functions such as scheduled texts in advance bring your medication counseling to the next level as you can be available at times the patients prefer. Having a built-in auto-reply will provide the capability for instant responses allowing your pharmacy to respond quickly, even during busiest times of the day or after hours.
Zipwhip, a Seattle-based business texting software provider, pioneered the concept of using the cloud to enable existing mobile, landline, and toll free numbers to send and receive text messages from any connected device.

Additionally, Zipwhip offers a carrier-grade cloud texting platform to help mobile and landline operators modernize the texting medium. Its technology introduces trailblazing functionality while holding true to the distinct culture of texting that consumers have grown to love.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Visit: www.zipwhip.com

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Resources


