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Patient engagement: Convenience, cost savings and beyond

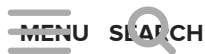
By ECLINICALWORKS

Mar 1, 2017 at 9:37 AM

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Providers are burdened by tight schedules and other demands, so it's little wonder they're hesitant to add to their workload by dreaming up new ways to engage with patients. However, providers should get involved in the patient engagement process because it can lead to better health outcomes — and cost savings, says Sidd Shah, leading the patient engagement initiative called [healow™](#) at [eClinicalWorks](#), a cloud-based electronic health records company. There is significant investment made by eClinicalWorks both on financial and resource fronts towards healow, which stands for Health and Online Wellness and provides a suite of tools focused on making communication between providers and patients secure, easy, and convenient.

While countless apps are available to help patients be more active in improving their health, little is geared toward making providers part of the engagement process. But



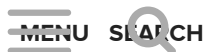
Patients and providers can engage with health in two areas: in the clinic and outside it. In the clinic, engagement is fairly straightforward. How does the patient book appointments? How do they check-in? These engagement tools can make healthcare more convenient — or more frustrating — for patients, depending how they're implemented.

For instance, enabling easy online appointment scheduling would save patients from battling a busy signal each time they call the office. Upon check-in, patients are typically handed a clipboard and tasked with filling out forms they've already completed many times over. An electronic kiosk, like those now ubiquitous at airports, would streamline the process for patients and save providers money on staff, paper and storage. [Patient engagement](#) within the clinic can be streamlined through [healow's Open Online Booking](#) capabilities and its [Kiosk app for iPad](#) that allows seamless check-in.

Once patients leave the clinic, the opportunities for engagement expand. That's where the eClinicalWorks app [healow™](#), comes in. It empowers patients by making them the custodians of their own medical records, including doctors' notes, prescription information and lab results. healow also integrates with wearables, sharing patients' health tracking data with providers in a manageable way (think averages, rather than daily step counts). Patients can browse goals and follow-up appointments, and add other family members to their account. (This is especially relevant in the [healow Kids](#) app for younger patients.) healow keeps patients engaged by sending health reminders using its Messenger product via voice calls, text messages, emails and app notifications. Additionally, with Televisit capabilities built within healow, patients have the ability to connect with their doctors remotely from anywhere.

Currently, there are more than 50 million patients on [eClinicalWorks](#) who have access to their health information online. "Making health information available to a patient is almost a given now," Shah says. That's because there are benefits for both patients and providers when patients are more engaged with their care. When patients have access to what was discussed at their appointments, it's easier for them to follow through with goals. Receiving reminders on tasks such as scheduling annual exams or getting a flu shot helps patients be more compliant.

In fact, eClinicalWorks case studies on healow adoption are already showing how patients benefit from this technology. In one instance, a woman was hospitalized after an accident, avoided surgery when she used the healow app to show doctors lab results proving her low blood count was a chronic issue, rather than a result of the accident. These technologies



Because marketing the technologies is key to patient buy-in, the healow team assists provider practices in educating patients through media such as TV spots in the waiting room, use of social media and explanatory brochures. “Patients are always looking for this,” Shah says. “It’s a matter of making them aware of these technologies.”

healow also has a goal to achieve this year: making patient health data available through third-party application program interface (API) so other apps could use this information — with consent — for the betterment of certain health conditions. eClinicalWorks is working with researchers and teams from the National Institutes of Health and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology on the [All of Us Research Program](#) as a part of making this goal a reality.

As the healthcare system evolves to become more focused on patient outcomes and cost savings — while patients become more engaged with their health and their providers — eClinicalWorks will work to streamline these processes. “It’s an important change,” Shah says.

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