



## THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE FROM THE PATIENT PERSPECTIVE: THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

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With the ever-changing landscape in healthcare, both patients and doctors may have much to be concerned about. Issues of access to care, cost of care and an increasing number of patients turning to the internet in order to self-diagnose has greatly impacted how primary care practices (PCP) deliver their services. Patients are becoming consumers in a very literal sense, forcing practice administrators to focus on innovating new methods of attracting their business, and providing upgraded and value-added services in order to retain existing patients. Better customer service and communication are key areas, with many practices moving to implement telemedicine and other consumer-level technologies to meet patient demand. The patient's role in decision-making is also a key trend, driven by an increasing tendency to "shop around" for better deals on insurance, diagnostic procedures and more. Today's road forward looks more like a business plan than it does a patient care model.

### PATIENT-DOCTOR COMMUNICATION

The ability to communicate directly with a primary care physician is associated with quality of care, and is critical to the successful delivery of healthcare services. By opening the doors to better communication, by listening to the patient's needs and concerns, you are providing the care and support necessary to foster a relationship that promotes healing. In conversations with patients, there is always an opportunity to provide therapeutic support. By encouraging open dialogue, the patient feels supported in making difficult choices, is more confident in pursuing care strategies, and thus more likely to achieve a positive result. The breakdown of patient-doctor communication and a loss of confidence in the ability to confide in one's physician may



be a product of the medical system itself, but there is always an opportunity to turn this around and change the very nature of the relationship. It might be an old-fashioned concept, but the upside to the physician is better patient loyalty, retention and improved therapeutic outcomes, achieved simply by making an effort to get to know who their patient really is.