



# How Technology Can Help Boost Your Medical Practice Convenience Rating

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Quality of care is supreme, but patients greatly appreciate increased levels of convenience when it comes to medical practices and institutions. Investment in medical technology is an established means to improving your patients' experience. People are using technology as a convenience in just about every aspect of their lives, from shopping to banking to entertainment, and they grow frustrated when their healthcare experiences aren't similarly endowed.

## **Improving Patient Convenience Via Technology**

Technology can enhance perceived patient convenience in a wide variety of ways:

## **Establishing Electronic Medical Records (EMR)**

A growing trend in medicine, converting to EMRs has numerous patient benefits, including more accurate diagnoses and improved efficiency of the office visit experience.

Rather than relying on patients' imperfect—and often unreliable—memories to solicit important medical information, a patient's entire medical history can be pulled up on the spot including dates of previous visits, test results, a list of medications and allergies, medical images and so on.

Not only is the information more reliable, but also no more time is wasted taking medical histories. Appointments take less time and are much more focused on the clinical aspects of the visit rather than administrative tasks.

## **Creating Patient Portals**

A patient portal is an online entity—in the form of a stand alone website or embedded within a healthcare provider's pre-existing website—that allows interaction between patients and healthcare providers.

By relying on the online model, it has the advantage of allowing communication and patient activity without directly interacting with office staff, making it a highly convenient alternative to phone calls or face-to-face communication. Using a portal, patients can easily deal

with routine procedural matters such as appointment scheduling, checking office hours, obtaining driving directions, requesting prescription updates and the like.

Patients can also sign up to receive e-mail reminders for inoculations or routine annual tests and can retrieve practitioner-screened information about a variety of medical conditions, receive health tips, retrieve certain test results, and request more direct forms of communication for specific matters. All of these things bring added convenience to patients.

## **Establishing Automated Systems**

In yet another example of technology improving patient convenience through office efficiency, an automated system can be created to send out appointment reminders electronically.

By embedding a reply mechanism—a button to click on a reminder e-mail, for instance—a practice can establish appointment confirmation, thereby reducing the no-show rate that plagues many healthcare providers. This will limit the tendency for physicians to overbook appointments, meaning that appointment times will be more meaningful for patients.

Reminders can also be sent to patients that include information about things they need to bring (e.g. samples, etc.) or special instructions that need to be followed for a given appointment

(e.g. fasting, etc.) to further improve appointment efficiency and convenience. If need be, patients can be automatically updated about physician delays (called for emergency surgery, etc.) that might impact their appointments.

Automated systems can also be used to verify routine information (insurance, contact information, etc.) and even to obtain office co-pays, all of which will speed the administrative aspect of appointments.

## **Medical Technology Assistance**

While the benefits of technology for patient convenience are undeniable, implementing such a system in a cost-effective manner can be intimidating for a medical practice or institution.

Consulting with a medical IT professional brings many advantages, including technical expertise and the ability to ensure that the system you choose is well-defined for your needs, meets growth goals and allows the practice to conform to federal HIPPA requirements.



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