Innovative Ways to Improve the Patient Experience

10
DOs & DON'Ts

SUMMARY

A national study conducted by Catalyst Healthcare Research finds new ways to improve the patient experience in the doctor's office.

APPROACH

The study was conducted via an online survey of 400 Baby Boomer patients (born 1945-1960) living in the U.S. during the month of March 2012. To qualify, respondents had to have seen a doctor within the previous two years. The margin of error for the overall results is estimated at +/- 5%.
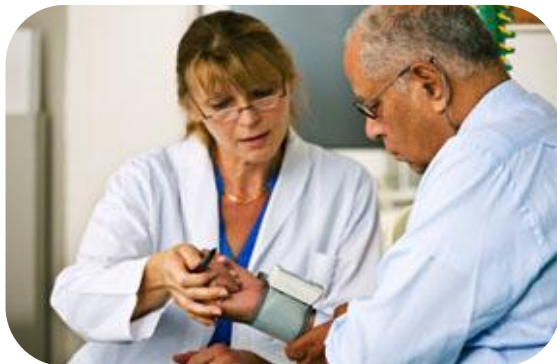
Baby Boomers were selected as the focus of this study because they represent a large and vocal segment of society. In addition, they are becoming heavy users of healthcare as they age, with 10,000 Baby Boomers becoming eligible for Medicare every day.

The behaviors tested in the survey were selected by Catalyst Healthcare Research, based on the company's experience interviewing thousands of patients on behalf of health providers, health plans, and suppliers to the healthcare industry.

KEY FINDINGS

Baby Boomers agree that if doctor's offices could begin performing certain behaviors and stop performing others the patient experience would be more satisfactory. Over **85%** of respondents said that their patient experience would be *better* if their doctor's office would provide them with a printed summary of their visit, including their medical diagnosis and the recommended plan of action, upon exiting the office. **84%** of respondents said that their patient experience would be *worse* if their doctor spent most of his/her time typing on a computer, instead of making eye contact with them.

If we take Baby Boomers' perspectives seriously, doctors and doctor's office staff have the opportunity to change their behaviors such that today's patient experience will be more in line with today's patient expectations.

Let's take a look at ten creative ways that doctor's offices can enhance the patient experience.

88% Hand a patient a printed summary of their visit as they leave the office, including the diagnosis and recommended plan of action

86% Talk to a patient about changing their behavior rather than immediately prescribing a drug for their situation

82% Provide a patient with a reliable estimate of their charges for a specific surgical procedure that they need

66% Offer an app that allows a patient to log in securely to see their test results, send private messages to the doctor, etc.

64% Send a patient a text message about thirty minutes before their scheduled appointment to tell them if the doctor is running on schedule

60% Use a mobile device (smart phone or tablet) to look up information about a drug before telling a patient about it

35% Offer free WiFi so that a patient can connect to the Internet while they are waiting to see the doctor

84% Spend most of your time typing on a computer, not making eye contact with a patient

67% Schedule a patient to see their doctor but then have a nurse practitioner visit with them

59% Avoid confronting or encouraging a patient to change their personal behaviors that are affecting their health (like smoking or obesity)
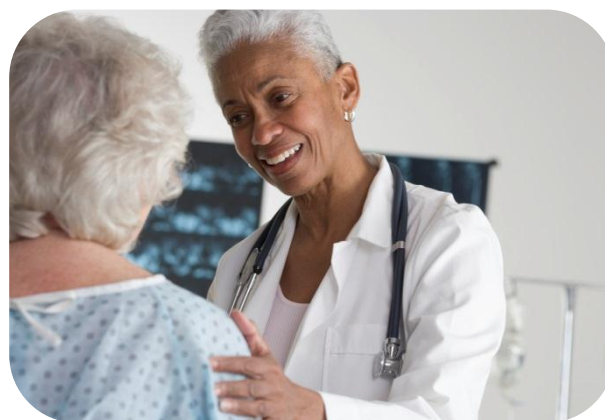
"While many practices are struggling to meet basic patient expectations, some are doing very well and want to go further in providing an exemplary patient experience," says Dan Prince, President of Catalyst Healthcare Research. "Ten of the ideas we tested in this study were in that spirit. We feel that innovators in healthcare will ultimately implement one or more of these ideas as a way of building stronger patient loyalty and differentiated brands."

Catalyst Healthcare Research (CHR) is a full-service research firm specializing in designing and conducting custom studies for health plans, health providers, and suppliers to the healthcare industry. Using a range of innovative research tools, CHR delivers key insights to healthcare organizations who want to understand, measure, and leverage "customer experience" to build stronger brands and capture more market share. CHR serves healthcare clients from start-ups to the Fortune 500 from its headquarters in Nashville, TN.

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