



Patient Education Platforms for Digital Content Delivery

Key Takeaways

Profile

UPMC

- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 6,000+ Licensed Beds
- 5,700+ Affiliated Physicians
- \$14.3 Billion Operating Revenue

Challenges

- Full utilization of digital delivery platforms requires integration between the EHR and other systems
- Resistance from both providers and patients to work through additional steps hinders educational initiatives

Solutions

- UPMC invested in an integrated platform vendor to prescribe digital health assets for education directly from the EHR
- Tasking providers with promoting and encouraging the use of the education platform
- This platform has become a part of the existing process, eliminating the need for additional training
- Track patient adherence to care plans and education on the same platform for information continuity

Results

- UPMC developed a frictionless process for providers and patients to prescribe and access content
- UPMC providers have a full spectrum view of patient adherence and engagement to guide follow-up health coaching

UPMC, one of the nation's largest integrated health systems, along with its innovation and commercialization arm in UPMC Enterprises, partnered with Xealth to integrate a digital content delivery platform which connects with the health system's Epic EHR. Connie Feiler, Senior Manager of Patient Education at UPMC, and Chris Katz, Senior Product Manager of Consumer Health for UPMC Enterprises, played key roles within the development of this project with a goal of improving patient education and the delivery of these resources.

"Our goal is consistency in what we teach our patients to better prepare them to manage their health," Feiler says.

UPMC Enterprises develops products organically within the organization and invests in commercialization efforts with external partners by offering the clinical and technical expertise of UPMC's subject matter experts. After investing in Xealth, UPMC strongly supported the use of the product across the enterprise and encouraged users to promote utilization whenever possible.

Prescribing Digital Health Assets

Xealth allows healthcare organizations to prescribe digital health assets such as educational articles, videos, apps, devices, or even technology enabled services. UPMC's first use case focused on the prescription of digital education content to patients.

While Xealth provides the delivery mechanism, UPMC depends on Healthwise to support the health system with quality educational content



in the form of reading materials and videos. Xealth is integrated with Epic, the outpatient EHR at UPMC, and Xealth's platform allows providers to prescribe content to patients based on their specific condition or treatment—all from within the EHR. For example, if a patient has been newly diagnosed with diabetes, the provider can order a video about drawing up insulin. The video is then delivered via Xealth to UPMC's patient portal in the same interface that the patient would typically access messages from their doctor, test results, or appointment scheduling tools.

Xealth then tracks patient interaction with the prescribed content—whether it was opened or not—and feeds this information back to the EHR. This tracking gives UPMC providers a better understanding of how engaged the patient is for follow-up conversations.

Integration as a Key Feature

Digital health solutions are rising in popularity for both providers and patients, spurring the need for the healthcare industry to innovate. UPMC saw patient education as a meaningful place to start with its digital health investments. With Xealth, UPMC is looking beyond education to other areas as well.

Without a unified platform, the health system would have had to integrate all vendors individually into their existing care workflows. Instead, Xealth allowed for a single integration across the EHR and patient portal and efficient navigation for providers and patients. Providers can engage with a patient who is not sitting face-to-face with them and can do so at a level that was not possible before.

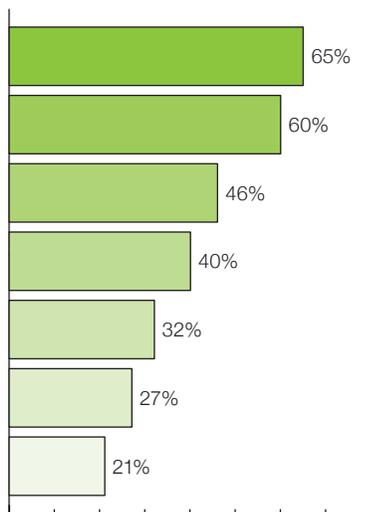
"Certainly, there was some initial upfront integration work with our EHR and patient portal, but that was a one-time set up of the platform," Katz says. "Since then we've been able to train our staff, providers and nurses how to use the platform to prescribe and monitor our educational content. It has become a part of their existing process instead of needing to add more staff or change things for the office workflow."

Katz notes that having a centralized library of vendor assets has had a significant impact on the efficiency of the organization's engagement investments. The platform allows UPMC to easily add new vendors and content use cases without necessitating custom integration for each vendor.



Current Patient Experience Offerings Within Healthcare Organizations

Source: PwC (2017)



- Online Bill Pay
- Digital Communication Tools
- Remote Patient Monitoring
- Caregiver Tools and Support
- Clinical Tools/Support
- Educational Tools
- Interactive Patient Engagement

Healthcare organizations have focused patient engagement investments in communication and billing, but industry players have noted a trend toward investing in patient satisfaction across the board.

“The more organized you can be with your program before you start a digital health effort, the better.”

– Connie Feiler
Senior Manager of Patient Education
UPMC

Identifying Effective Use Cases for Digital Education

Rather than technical challenges, UPMC discovered that finding the right fit and use cases for digital patient education proved to be the most difficult component of using the solutions. The organization cares for many patients who may not be comfortable accessing a patient portal or may not fall into the ideal demographic to engage in digital health. However, by partnering directly with clinical leadership groups and patient education teams, UPMC was able to select the service lines that might gain the most immediate value from digital education.

“To unlock the full value of the Xealth platform, we wanted to do our best to ensure that providers and patients would utilize it,” Katz says. “Xealth is very good at making the process frictionless for providers and patients to prescribe and access the content, but you have to have the right starting point.”

While the platform is used to prescribe and distribute educational resources, UPMC believes several use cases involving digital health apps and devices could be employed in the near future, such as shared decision making. Decision aids and tools such as questionnaires that patients can complete at home can be sent through Xealth to walk the patient through treatment options. For example, patients might receive a questionnaire to help evaluate the pros and cons of knee surgery, giving them time to reflect on the choice, and offering other options such as trying physical therapy before surgery.

“We’re excited about having another opportunity for patients to engage and manage their own health,” Feiler says. “It’s giving the patients the time to really think through key decisions so they’re prepared to talk with their provider. I think they have a better conversation and a better partnership instead of years ago when the doctor would tell the patient what they recommended instead of learning what the patient wanted.”

Lessons Learned

Two critical factors for UPMC’s success have involved developing clear goals and organizing them internally before engaging an external vendor.

“The more organized you can be with your program before you start a digital health effort, the better,” Feiler says. “We used to have twelve different education vendors because we had multiple EHRs. We chose a primary education vendor and then began working with Xealth.”

Leadership and local champions were critical for this endeavor. Organizations will need leaders at every level who understand the purpose and value of such investments. Without both operational and leadership buy-in, it will be difficult to deploy a project throughout the entire organization.

“We see the trend moving toward using more and more digital health solutions to deliver care for our patients,” Katz says. “This is a starting point. We expect to expand this significantly over time. It’s early, but we feel it’s very promising for patients and clinicians.”

What does this mean for you?

C-Suite

- Healthcare is trending toward digital health solutions to deliver care and education directly to patients
- Without a unified platform, each vendor must be individually integrated into existing care workflows

Peers

- Large health systems must ensure engagement and education efforts stay consistent throughout the organization
- Leadership and local champions are critical at every level to understand the purpose and value of digital solutions

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