WHY RETAIL CLINICS NEED A PATIENT SELF-SERVICE PLATFORM

DISRUPTION AND THE RISE OF WALK-IN CLINICS

Healthcare has traditionally lagged behind other industries in offering a consumer-oriented experience, but that is changing by leaps and bounds. Healthcare is being disrupted from all sides due to a confluence of factors like the rising costs of care and patient responsibility, a deficit in primary care doctors, and technology introducing consumer-centric services across the board.

Retail walk-in clinics arrived on the scene in 2000.[i] Though still vastly outnumbered by doctors' offices and hospitals, retail clinics are spreading rapidly: There currently are almost 1,900 across the U.S., up more than sevenfold in the last decade.[ii] Since then, the healthcare consumer has been on the rise. Patients realize that retail clinics can reduce costs,[iii] improve outcomes, increase access, and are simply more convenient.

What gives retail its edge, however, is its resources for adopting innovative technologies to better serve patient populations. Patient self-service can provide speed, cost transparency, better communication, and overall, a better patient experience.

CONVENIENCE & SPEED

Millennials are notorious for their need for instant gratification.[iv] [v] However, all generations are affected by technology trends. With the advent of heart-, like-, comment-, and share-notifications, and on-demand platforms like Uber, Amazon, Venmo, and NetFlix, technology consumers expect convenience, speed, and communication.

However, the growing deficit in primary care doctors in traditional care settings means more waiting – in fact, the time to schedule an appointment has jumped 30% in major US cities from 18.5 days in 2014.[vi] [vii] For common health concerns that require immediate attention – common illnesses, small injuries, immunizations, and lab tests – walk-in clinics are a way to get treated quickly.

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Patient self-service can speed time to service even more. By removing burdensome paperwork by reception staff, express check-in kiosks and tablets can reduce wait times from an average of 10 to 2.5 minutes even in the busiest clinics. A patient self-service platform can also allow retail clinics to give patients insight into expected wait times at all phases of service. Communication addresses the need for immediate feedback and reinforces the sense of speed of service.

COST TRANSPARENCY

The retail industry is a model for cost transparency. A consumer can walk into any retail store or pharmacy for cough medicine and know the price before they purchase it at the counter. This gives any consumer peace of mind: no surprises at checkout, no mysterious bills in the mail, and the freedom of choice. In traditional healthcare settings, care estimates are still rare but in retail walk-in clinics, flat fees are becoming more typical.

Using patient self-service, retail clinics can drive this transparency even further. By entering their insurance information, patients can access real-time, upfront cost estimates at kiosks. Moreover, this information is actionable and streamlines the patients experience. Kiosks can accept payment via credit, debit, or HSA card, allowing the patient to bypass the check-out line on their way out.

BUILDING LOYALTY & STAYING AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

Customer experience is no longer about friendly faces at the checkout counter or about logos on signage; it now includes digital interactions. In an age when former executives from Google and Uber are looking to disrupt healthcare by creating subscription-based spa-like healthcare options, it's important to keep pace with user experience for customer retention.[viii] A great technology experience like digital forms and questionnaires, payment estimates, and queuing can deepen brand loyalty and can create repeat customers.

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These tools are not only patient-facing, they're also administrative. Real-time reporting and dashboards, give clinics other providers the ability to spot bottlenecks, backlogs, or unique cases so adjustments to the queue can be made on the spot. In addition, aggregate metrics over time can help management to identify inefficiencies, and when applied over a franchise, staff can be reassigned based on regional needs. Patients feel these efficiency gains and will express their loyalty in future care decisions.

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[vi] https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-walk-in-health-care-is-a-fast-growing-profit-center-for-retail-chains/2014/04/04/a05f7cf4-b9c2-11e3-96ae-f2c36d2b1245_story.html?utm_term=.cd6cc6400970
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