4 Ways to Build Trust with Patients Online
By Peter Do, Marketing Strategist at Healthcare Success

Trust is essential to any relationship. And it’s a key factor in maintaining relationships between doctors (and healthcare organizations) and patients. In person, building trust with patients depends on creating the best possible experience in the office and showing compassion.

So how can hospitals, practices, and organizations maintain that level of trust in the digital age? We’ve outlined 4 ways to build trust with your patients online in the guide below.

#1: Provide Access to Medical Records Online
Change is hard. However, switching over to a system that allows your patients to view their medical records online can build necessary trust.

In this day and age, patients are frustrated by any obstacle to receiving their medical information. Of course, they can always request medical records from your office. But today’s patients don’t want to feel that there’s a “gatekeeper” guarding their personal records.

Using a secure patient portal shows that you care about your patients’ time and want to provide a convenient experience. One study showed that the use of a secure messaging tool increased patient satisfaction from 48% to 59%.

#2: Use Review Sites Responsibly
Sites like Yelp give business owners the option of responding to reviews publicly or privately. In some cases, it’s best to reach out via a direct message. When responding publicly, you should never confirm that the reviewer is a patient or disclose any information about their visit, in order to comply with HIPAA.

Otherwise, a public response to a negative review can help build back trust with the reviewer and establish trust with anyone who comes across it. After all, 74% of patients trust online reviews as much as a recommendation from a friend.

Even a quick note to a concerned patient can signal to them and others that you care about their feedback, and—more importantly—you’re working to improve.

EXAMPLE: A patient complains about long wait times at your office.

Poor response: Sorry you feel this way, but our wait times are actually much lower than the industry average.
Better response: Thank you for your feedback. I’m forwarding this along to the appropriate team so we can work on resolving this issue.

Best response: Thank you for your feedback. We apologize for any inconvenience. We’re working on implementing a new scheduling system that should help to reduce wait times in the future.

In the final example, the provider builds trust with the patient by not only apologizing for the inconvenience but actively working to resolve the issue.

**#3: Provide Useful Content Online**
A popular way to build trust with an audience, whether or not they are already patients—is to provide useful information. Prospective and current patients are likely to trust providers who can give reliable educational content online.

Typically, this content is hosted on your website and may be shared via social media or email. This may include blog posts about preventing the common cold, the importance of flu shots, tips for recovering from surgery, etc.

While content is important to build trust, your ultimate goal is to get patients through the doors for the best possible care. Content should remind patients of the importance of medical intervention and include a call-to-action for patients to call or fill out a form.

**#4: Communicate Online—Often**
Follow-up calls and mailers can be a great way to re-engage patients or simply show that you care. But many of today’s patients use the internet as a primary means of communication.

In many ways, the future of healthcare delivery is digital. If you have the option of giving patients more digital access to you and your team, it’s only in your best interest.

Allowing frequent access to providers via a HIPAA-compliant app on a mobile phone is a great way to build trust. Many direct primary care practices now use apps like Spruce to connect with patients. More and more providers also allow telehealth usage for things like prescription refills.

While your organization has unique needs and capabilities, consider these types of digital improvements to bridge the gap between a patient’s busy life and your organization. Communicate often via HIPAA-compliant apps or emails to build rapport and help patients continue to get the care and support they need.

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