

Physician's Guide to

# Improving Communication and Patient Engagement





# Meaningful patient engagement requires a collaborative approach

Patient engagement is commonly used to describe the relationship between providers and their patients. Meaningful patient engagement occurs when there is a collaborative partnership between patients and their care team. To be actively engaged, patients (and their caregivers) must be included in the conversation and feel empowered to respond and contribute to managing their healthcare.

Research continues to show that higher patient engagement results in cost savings<sup>1</sup> and improved patient outcomes<sup>2</sup>. However, gaps in communication between patients and providers remain a key issue for many physician practices, which often leads to poor health outcomes. Environments where active patient engagement is the norm require built-in processes that facilitate ongoing communication and support patients and physicians working in partnership.

Benefits of investing in patient engagement:

- Increased patient revenue cycle
- Reduced readmissions
- Fewer no-show appointments
- Higher care plan adherence
- Improved patient satisfaction

When almost every aspect of daily life can be managed from a smartphone, patients are also becoming more proactive about their healthcare experiences. Many prefer the ease of use, quick responses, and convenience of text and video chat capabilities that patient engagement tools provide.

<sup>1</sup> HealthAffairs.org- <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0941>

<sup>2</sup> JAMA Network- <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2783547>

# Using secure messaging across the patient care lifecycle

Effective communication throughout the care journey keeps providers and patients aligned and improves outcomes. Secure messaging, through a HIPAA-compliant clinical communication and collaboration platform, allows physician groups to engage with their patients throughout the care journey. Here is an overview of a few ways healthcare organizations can engage patients pre-visit, during-visit, and post-visit:



## Pre-Visit

- Appointment confirmations & reminders
- Pre-appointment instructions
- Intake paperwork
- Broadcast messaging (office hours, seasonal announcements, etc.)



## During Visits

- Virtual waiting room
- Remote check-ins
- Family communications (status updates, discharge notifications, etc.)
- Virtual visits



## Post-Visit and Beyond

- Post-visit follow up
- Patient-initiated communication (questions, support, etc.)
- Wellness management
- Chronic condition management
- Wound management



# Pre-Visit

## Send pre-visit instructions with appointment reminders

A comprehensive study by HIMSS (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society) found that messaging reminders with pre-appointment instructions have the potential to reduce missed appointments between 5-10% in an ambulatory setting<sup>3</sup>. Missed appointments directly impact the provider's revenue stream and also extend the time a patient has to wait to receive care. Automated appointment reminders address both issues by sending out secure SMS reminders before the scheduled appointment.

## Save time with preliminary intake

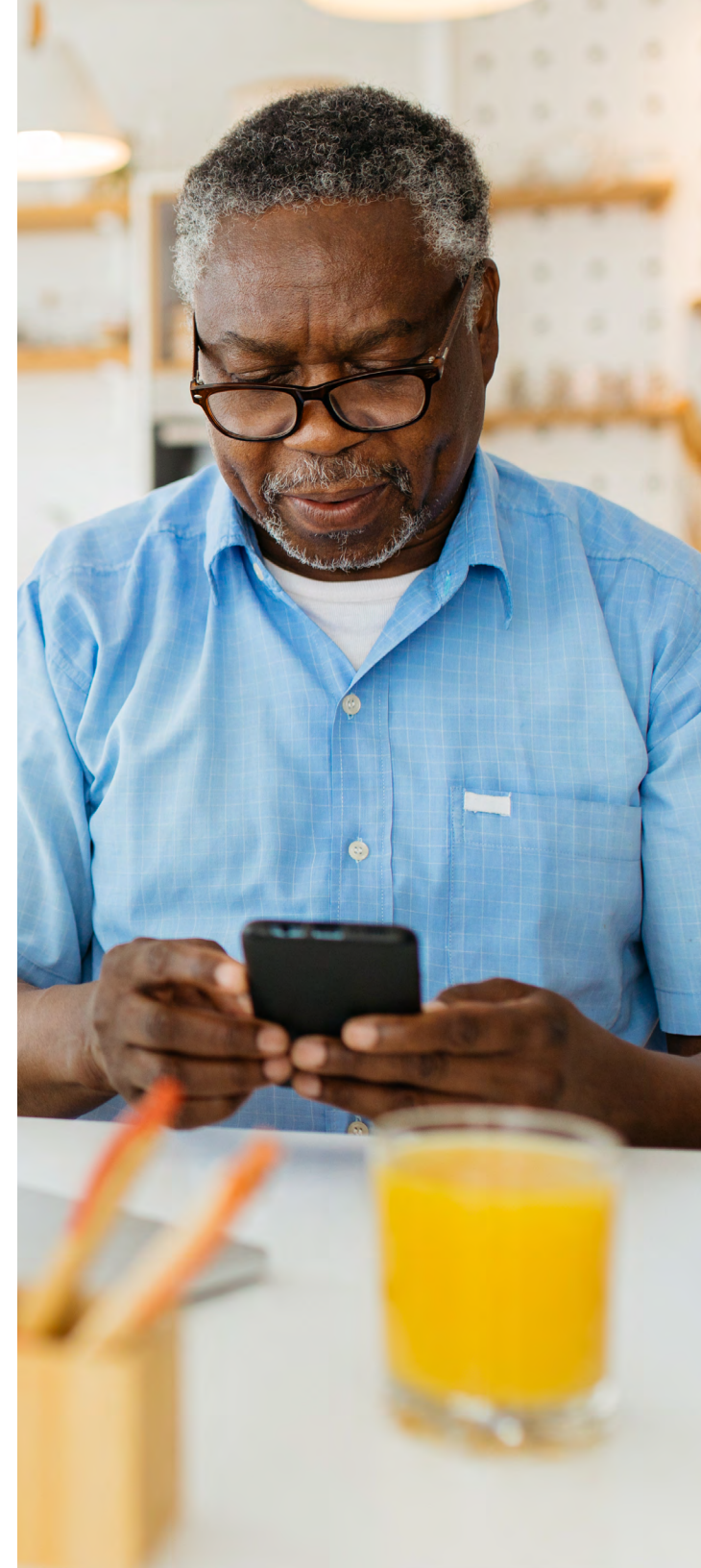
Traditionally, the patient intake process has required patients to complete paper documents in the waiting room. Once completed, staff then manually enter the information into their system. Automating this process by sending patients a secure message with a link to a digital form before the patient's arrival eliminates the time patients need to spend in waiting rooms and saves staff members time. Patients can input their health and contact information in an interactive form from the comfort of their homes.

<sup>3</sup> HIMSS- <https://www.himss.org/resources/using-technology-reduce-missed-appointments>

## Quickly reach patients at scale with broadcast messaging

Healthcare professionals have found broadcast messaging to be a valuable resource for keeping patients updated on changing policies and practices, particularly during the onset of COVID-19. Secure broadcast messages can be sent to a large group of patients to announce closures, provide general preventative care information, and even collect patient feedback through surveys. Additionally, healthcare professionals can create subgroups to send broadcast messages to a specific patient population.

It is important to keep in mind that while many healthcare organizations already use reminder apps to text patients automatically, these apps may leverage unsecure, non-HIPAA-compliant, consumer-based messaging channels such as SMS. Providers can only text limited information (nothing identifiable), and it is a one-way conversation. Opting for a secure, HIPAA-compliant clinical collaboration platform that offers secure patient engagement eliminates risk and opens the lines of communication for patients and providers.





## During Visit

### **Monitor in-person and virtual visits with a welcome lobby**

Another critical component of patient engagement is the ability to address patient concerns, particularly with urgent messages. Healthcare professionals can streamline patient communication by replacing phone calls with a text-based welcome lobby for patients to ask general questions or schedule appointments. Providers can answer questions, update statuses, and view and prioritize the patient queue.

### **Improve access to care with virtual visits**

Healthcare organizations must focus on meeting the needs of patients – in and outside of a traditional healthcare setting. Voice and video calling allows providers and patients to conduct virtual visits at the patient's convenience. Providing patients with a frictionless way to communicate with providers improves patient engagement and helps increase access to physicians and specialists – especially for patients in rural areas.

### **Coordinate with patients and their caregivers**

When the provider, patient, and family members understand and are committed to following the care plan, the patient is empowered to move forward effectively. Secure group messaging allows everyone to be aligned by including the entire care team in the conversation. Removing barriers from patients or family members to follow up on questions and concerns is key to empowering the patient to follow the prescribed plan. Likewise, automating the provider's ability to track the patient's adherence to the care plan streamlines support staff workflows required for ongoing patient engagement.



# Post-Visit

## Send medication reminders and symptom check-ins

According to the American Medical Association, inadequate communication accounts for over 50% of medication nonadherence<sup>4</sup>. Secure messaging enables physicians or staff to follow up with patients to remind them to take medication or check in on their symptoms. If a patient expresses concern or has a question, clinicians can quickly schedule a video chat to provide care. Patients who are more engaged with their physician's care plan are more likely to adhere to its recommendations, reducing preventable emergency department visits.

## Communicate directly with patients about post-visit care

After a procedure or surgery, patients often feel anxious about their post-operative care. Monitoring pain, care plan adherence, and wound care through patient engagement tools translates into less frustration and faster answers for patients. For example, if a patient is concerned about wound care for a recent incision, they can text their provider a photo of the site. The provider can activate a video session with the patient or recommend that the patient visit the office for further evaluation.

## Share secure test result notifications

Care teams can share blood work, annual physical results, and other test results with patients via secure text message as they become available and provide options for the patient's next steps. Additionally, if testing for COVID has occurred, texted test results can help positive patients isolate sooner to reduce their exposure to others.

<sup>4</sup> American Medical Association- <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/patient-support-advocacy/8-reasons-patients-dont-take-their-medications>





# Kodiak Kindness uses TigerConnect Patient Engagement to Support New Parents

Lactation consultant and pediatric dietician Heather Preece founded the nonprofit Kodiak Kindness to be a community resource for new parents living on the remote island of Kodiak, Alaska. Kodiak Kindness provides compassionate, free, and evidence-based infant feeding support services to families through their baby's first year of life.

Before partnering with TigerConnect, new parents in the program received calls and texts from multiple phone numbers. This was problematic from a HIPAA and ease-of-use standpoint, as parents may not always recognize the number calling them, and text communications were not necessarily secure. TigerConnect helped the nonprofit improve member experience and deliver secure, personalized care with a modern patient engagement solution.







## TigerConnect Helped Kodiak Kindness Simplify Outreach

*"We are absolutely thrilled with TigerConnect and our ability to do secure messaging, as well as the masked phone call feature. TigerConnect really has been an amazing technology boost for us!"*

–Heather Preece, MHSc, RDN, IBCLC, RLC, Volunteer Executive Director of Kodiak Kindness

Masked phone numbers made it possible to reduce the number of phone numbers to two – a warm main line and a masked phone number that enables peer counselors to call using their personal phones while displaying the main line. Because parents recognize the number calling, they are more likely to answer.

Secure patient engagement allows peer counselors to quickly engage families in their preferred communication method. Counselors can now proactively check in with a friendly "Hey, how's it going?" text, and moms can respond by sending a photo of their baby or a breastfeeding sore over a secure, HIPAA-compliant channel.

Video chat facilitates face-to-face conversation when text isn't enough. Counselors and parents can hop on a video call and talk through any issues the family may be experiencing.

Group messaging between family members, peer counselors, and the executive director support collaboration for the entire care team. Additionally, this feature provides the executive director with a new level of oversight, ensuring evidence-based information and consistent messaging are delivered to every family they serve.

TigerConnect Patient Engagement streamlined communications between counselors and families to promote healthy infant feeding. Parents had peace of mind knowing that Kodiak Kindness' support was just a text away.



# 6 questions to ask to determine the right solution for you

Technology solutions specifically designed for patient engagement are relatively new in the healthcare industry, and each offers unique capabilities. As you start evaluating technologies for your practice, ask the questions below to determine if the solution has the necessary elements to engage your care teams and patients while protecting patient and physician data.

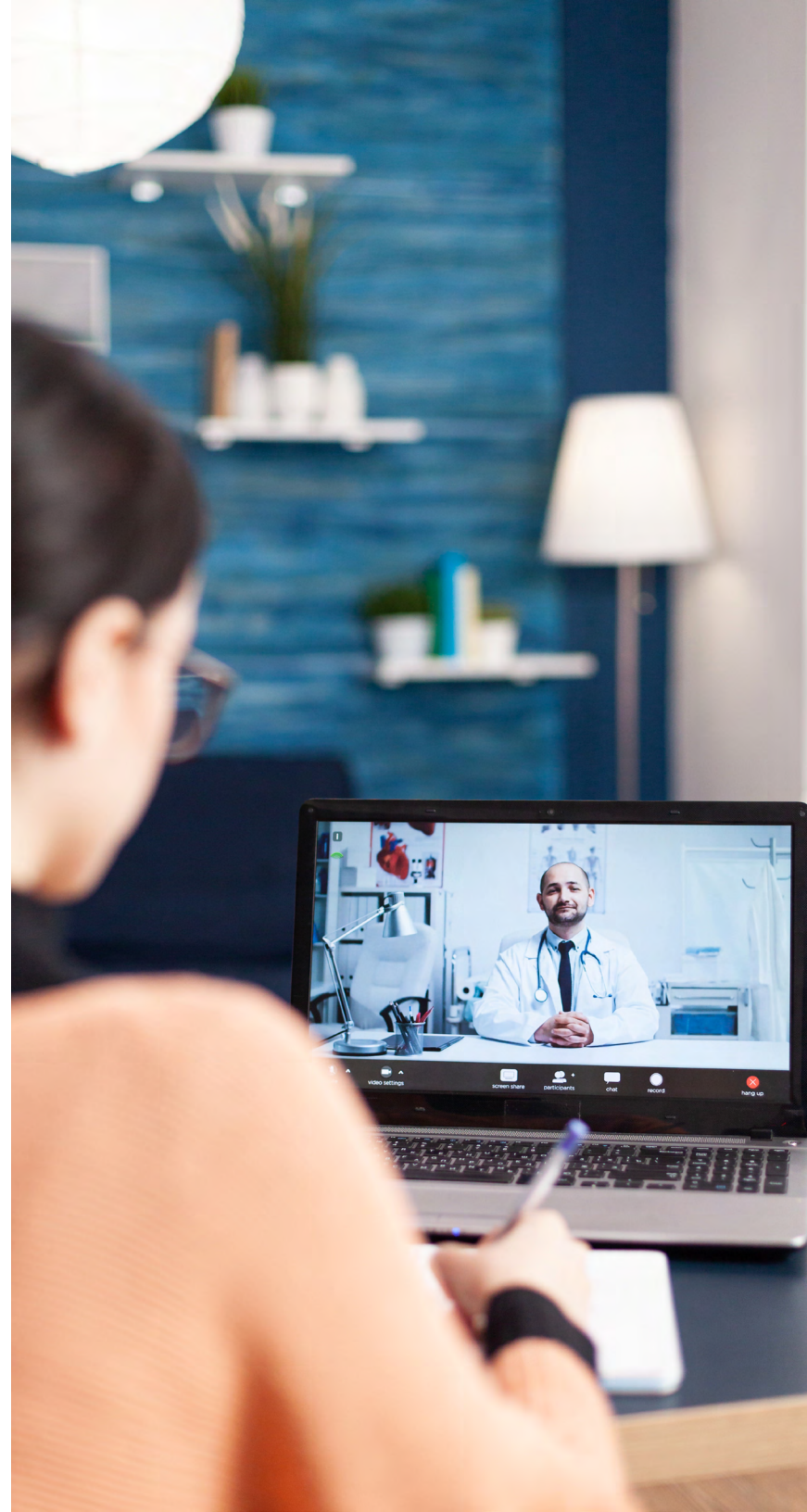
## 1. Is the solution secure and HIPAA-compliant?

First and foremost, you want the patient engagement technology you select to protect your patients and your physicians and close any existing compliance gaps in your communication processes. Choose a solution that offers secure, HIPAA-compliant video, voice, and text capabilities for communicating with patients through secure channels. You should be able to set appointment reminders, collect intake documents, and follow up post-care while keeping sensitive information protected.

## 2. Can providers message patients and family members pre-, during, and post-visit?

Readmission rates drop when care teams are aligned and patients (and their caretakers) receive clear communications. Look for a solution that includes multiple options for patient outreach throughout the care journey.

- Appointment reminders and remote check-ins lead to fewer missed appointments.
- Secure texts with pre- and post-visit instructions and regular follow-ups are likely to increase care plan adherence.
- Engaging family members with group video, voice, or text capabilities helps coordinate patient hand-off, such as transportation and care follow-through.





### **3. Is the solution easy for patients to access?**

Patient engagement should be simple. Requiring patients to download an app or remember a password gets in the way of that. Choose a solution that allows patients to communicate with their care team within the browser. An SMS-delivered link into a secure, encrypted conversation safeguards the privacy of your patients and improves adoption.

### **4. Can you set up automated appointment reminders?**

Often patients miss their appointments simply because they forgot they had one scheduled. Missed patient appointments can delay care for patients in needing critical follow-up and lead to additional administrative work for your staff. Automating reminders – with the option to attach pre-visit instructions – reduces manual follow-up work for staff and increases the likelihood that patients will arrive for their scheduled visit.

### **5. Does the solution allow for patient-initiated outreach?**

Collaborative patient-care team interactions require two-way communication. Choose a solution that offers a secure messaging channel for patients to easily reach out with questions. When general inquiries, appointment scheduling, and medication questions can be efficiently routed and addressed, staff can spend less time fielding phone calls and more time focused on delivering quality care. Patients likewise will feel well-supported by their healthcare provider.

### **6. Can remote patient check-ins be enabled?**

Remote check-in allows patients to notify providers that they have arrived for their appointment while waiting from the comfort of their vehicle. Especially in light of the pandemic, this feature keeps patients out of waiting rooms to prevent congestion and reduces the spread of illnesses. Virtual preliminary intake and form collection also streamline the check-in process and shorten the duration of close contact interactions.



# TigerConnect Patient Engagement

TigerConnect is an integrated cloud communication platform that enables doctors, nurses, and clinical support staff to securely connect in real time within the health system and with patients.

## **No passwords to remember or apps to download**

Make engaging with care teams a user-friendly experience. Using TigerConnect, patients simply click a secure, encrypted URL link delivered via SMS. This URL launches a HIPAA-compliant web browser conversation where providers and patients can easily discuss care topics and share pictures or documents required to resolve the issue.

## **HIPAA-compliant video, voice, and text capabilities**

Keep patient data protected. TigerConnect offers multiple secure channels for engaging patients in their preferred format and is HITRUST Certified for meeting the gold standard in managing risk and protecting patient data. A text is all it takes to securely send appointment reminders, collect intake documents, and drive post-visit care plan adherence with regular follow-ups and educational materials.

## **A single app for all collaboration**

Promote patient-provider and provider-provider collaboration. The TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform and Patient Engagement solutions are available in one app, allowing easy access and communication. Providers can easily switch between patient and provider conversations, add care team members to existing conversations, and forward messages from a patient to other physicians in the provider network.

## **Welcome Lobby**

Enable patient-initiated outreach and manage appointments through the TigerConnect Welcome Lobby. Patients enter the virtual lobby through a publicly available link to schedule appointments, discuss general inquiries, or check in for an upcoming appointment. Staff can view and prioritize the active patient queue, update statuses, and notify providers when a patient is ready. Patients can remotely check in from your parking lot for safer in-office visits.

## **Your logo. Our platform.**

Build trust with patients through a branded, mobile-friendly, patient texting interface that features your organization's name and logo. Branded notifications let recipients know the message is from a reputable, familiar sender.

# Conclusion

Healthcare is experiencing a transformation, and status quo doctor-patient relationships are no longer enough. Patients have come to expect to be active participants in conversations surrounding their health. They also want the same easy access to their providers that they have in other industries transformed by mobile applications. Physician practices that can positively impact patient engagement will find that outcomes improve while healthcare costs go down.

However, not all patient engagement solutions are created equal. While the right solution has the potential to enhance your overall communication strategy and patient engagement capabilities, partnering with the wrong vendor can leave your organization open to compliance risk. The core of any patient engagement solution is its outreach capabilities to connect providers, staff, and patients while keeping patient data safe. Message automation, including appointment reminders, increases efficiency by reducing repetition for staff.

Partner with a patient engagement solution that brings patients and their care teams together. TigerConnect Patient Engagement is a powerful yet easy way for healthcare professionals to communicate with patients and caregivers before, during, and after their visit using a single, mobile-friendly platform. Effortlessly engage patients and let them text back. Send appointment reminders and collect intake documents. Keep family members updated throughout a procedure and drive post-visit care plan adherence with regular follow-ups and educational materials.

TigerConnect provides a frictionless experience for patients and providers to communicate with video, voice, and text.





# About TigerConnect

TigerConnect transforms healthcare with the industry's most widely adopted clinical collaboration platform – uniquely modernizing how doctors, nurses, care teams, patients, and data connect. With solutions spanning care communication, patient engagement, scheduling, alarm notifications, nurse call, and more, TigerConnect accelerates productivity, reduces costs, and improves patient outcomes, safely and securely. Trusted by more than 7,000 healthcare entities for user-friendly yet enterprise-ready solutions, TigerConnect delivers 99.995% verifiable uptime for more than 10 million messages each day.



2110 Broadway  
Santa Monica, CA 90404  
800.572.0470  
[www.tigerconnect.com](http://www.tigerconnect.com)

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