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## Consumerism in Healthcare



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The growing trend of consumerism in healthcare is drawing more attention to the provision of high-quality care at reasonable costs. It therefore behoves provider organisations to make significant strategic change in order to stay relevant and provide the kind of quality care patients, as consumers, expect.

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In this changing healthcare landscape, providers' ability to offer exceptional service is simply not enough. To remain competitive, healthcare organisations need to innovate and find ways to meet the demands of the healthcare consumer:

- Easy access to their healthcare data
- Convenient means of making appointments
- Lower costs (published online)
- Regular communication with providers
- Personalised care focused on the individual
- Technology that supports their health goals
- Increased transparency into quality metrics

This is not to ignore efforts taken by healthcare providers to enhance patient experience; indeed they are expected to continue doing so. However, in this period of industry disruption and innovation, without an underlying consumerism strategy that focuses on what patients want and anticipates future needs, those initiatives fall flat.

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[Huron managing](#) director Hazel Seabrook suggests that healthcare leaders must take into consideration these key factors when developing a consumer-focused strategy:

1. An **engaged medical staff** who are willing to be transparent and embrace the change this will mean
2. **Technology** that suits the requirements of consumers (ie, interactive platforms, apps that interface with medical records and physician offices, linkages to care coaches and integrated devices that transmit patient health data to providers)
3. Use of collected **data to manage chronic disease** effectively, keeping patients at home, which is where they want to be
4. **Consumer input** on what they need and want from their healthcare provider
5. Knowledge of leading **consumer-centric practices** from industries outside of healthcare

Knowing what consumers want and providing care that takes those preferences into account, according to experts, is how healthcare can impact all the modifiable determinants of health – at least 70% of the factors that contribute to premature death.

Consumerism in any industry has been shown to spur innovation that leads to improved quality and reduction in costs. As most healthcare organisations are not set up to deliver care the way consumers want to receive it, these organisations need to fundamentally transform. Again, such transformation must focus on these three primary areas: transparency of price and quality data; technology that engages patients; and personalised care that makes patients feel like more than just a number.

Source: Huron/Studer Group

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