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Staying Connected in Healthcare is Essential

The generation gap may be apparent when dealing with baby boomers and millennials, however they do share something in common when talking about their healthcare expectations. Yes, as patients, both demographics have a strong desire for more and better communication from their healthcare providers, an Intrado survey shows.

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It is worth noting though that the two groups differ in terms of specific needs and communication preferences, which healthcare teams should put into consideration when dealing with either baby boomers or millennials. Having patient engagement strategies designed for each of these distinct patient groups is crucial to improving patient satisfaction and elevating the quality of care for both patient cohorts.

The survey, covering 1,036 U.S. adults, found that 64% of baby boomers and 76% of millenials wish healthcare providers would communicate more often between visits – indicating that both age groups of patients want their providers' attention.

To give them that attention, healthcare teams can make use of patient engagement technology (already deployed at many hospitals) to improve and increase communication, says Nate Brogan, who is president of Notification Services at Intrado. By leveraging the same technology that is used to send appointment reminders, he says care teams can deliver personalised text, phone, and email messages that give baby boomers and millennials more of the meaningful between-visit communication they desire. Brogan provides some examples of how healthcare providers can use tailored communications to address the needs of both baby boomers and millennials:

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Email baby boomers information about managing chronic disease. Adults age 65 or older often have a chronic condition, and sharing valuable disease-specific information via email is an effective way to support baby boomers with at-home chronic disease management. By the year 2030, an estimated one in four baby boomers will have diabetes, and one in three will be obese. Sending emails about nutrition, for example, can be a good gesture of support from the healthcare team.

Text millennials to invite them to schedule preventive exams. For busy millennials, and for those with no known health issues, scheduling wellness exams and preventive procedures is not always a priority. It can be helpful for healthcare teams to send them text alerts when they are due for preventive exams. Millennials are adept at texting and, as Intrado's survey revealed, 94% of millennials want to receive text, voice calls, or email prompts to schedule appointments or take other similar actions.

Send baby boomers messages to support medication adherence. Intrado's survey also found that 88% of baby boomers feel that it is important for healthcare teams to send them reminders when their medications are available to be picked up or when prescriptions need to be refilled. Healthcare teams can easily send automated messages that remind patients to pick up prescriptions, clarify dosage instructions, or provide instructions on what to do if side effects become troublesome.

Create a wellness newsletter to send to millennials. Even if patients are already healthy, sharing wellness tips and information is a good way to encourage patients to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Sending a quarterly newsletter that covers topics such as smoking cessation and weight management, for example, is an easy way to communicate wellness advice to patients and encourage them to take steps to improve their health,

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according to Brogan.

Send baby boomers messages to help clarify financial obligations. As many baby boomers live on a low or modest income, they tend to worry about healthcare spending. Following retirement, boomers sometimes have a lot of questions about transitioning from private health insurance to Medicare. To help patients overcome financial barriers, healthcare teams can send baby boomers automated messages to share Medicare resources or highlight healthcare services that patients can receive for little or no out-of-pocket cost.

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