

5 Ways Technology Can Help Your Patient Relationship Management

☒ Patient relationship management is about more than just healthcare issues; it's about building a connection that leaves your patients feeling that you genuinely have their personal interests in mind. We all love to be recognized, and your patients appreciate it when you recall what their children's names are, what you discussed with them during their previous visit, and where they went for their vacation.

It's pretty impossible to keep track of everything if you have several hundred patients, however. That's where technology can help you. Remember the old box of patient card files on which you'd make notes? Now, keeping track is just so much easier with the various tools available to physicians.

#1: Keep Electronic Records

If you're a typical technophobe and don't relate well to unfamiliar software programs, your record-keeping can be as easy as a Word or Text document for each patient. Set up a template for yourself that lists the data you want to keep track of, and simply enter the information into the file after each patient visit. Information could include fields such as:

- Personal info
- Family details
- Chronic illnesses
- Allergies
- Medication
- Visits

As long as you update the patients' records diligently after every visit, this patient relationship management system will

work for you, although it doesn't enable you to communicate regularly.

#2: Use a Spreadsheet

A slightly more sophisticated way of keeping records than basic documents, Excel spreadsheets offer data sorting abilities that are useful. You can also keep all your patients' information in one file, which saves you having to track and open multiple files. Use the worksheet tabs to categorize and group patients by type of illness or some other criteria that's meaningful to you.

#3: Set Up a Database

There are multiple free and paid database programs available that you can use to set up a patient relationship management system. From Microsoft Office's Access program through to Apache Open Office's *Base*, and the software will not only store the information you add but generate reports, graphs, reminders and a mailing list that you can use with an email marketing program for communication purposes.

#4: Get a CRM Program

Commercial CRM programs such as InTouch CRM and BatchBook enable medical practices to store patient information, communicate via email or text message, and keep track of message opens and click throughs. A customized CRM program can do the same for your practice. Not only does the program have the ability to store all relevant information about each patient, but you can set up alerts to identify critical changes in the patient's condition based on data input from one visit to the next – without having to do a manual evaluation.

The patient relationship management program compares current data with data from previous consultations, such as blood

pressure readings and cholesterol screening results. If the comparison generates an alert, you can proactively contact the patient to discuss it. At the same time, the system can generate automatic emailing of information to the patient to help educate him.

#5: Implement a Patient Portal

Cream of the crop is the digital patient portal, which enables you to store all information about your patients including test results. Patients get a secure login that lets them view their health records as well as make appointments online or communicate with you via a question facility or a discussion forum. You can set up automated emails based on criteria such as birthdays (personal info), allergies (seasonal) and medication refills needed.

Whatever method you choose to help you with your patient relationship management, keeping the information up to date is vital to enable it to be successful.

✘ *About the Author: Greg Fawcett is President of leading North Carolina medical marketing firm Precision Marketing Partners. In this capacity Greg helps healthcare service entities to research their target markets, build their brands and develop creative strategies to reach patients.*