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Five Immediate Benefits of Incorporating Specialty Pharmacy Focused Automated Outbound Patient Notifications

A Special Report on the Strategic Implementation of SMS/text and Voice Notifications



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INTRODUCTION

Recent 2020 market research¹ revealed that specialty pharmacy growth is outpacing traditional prescription medication growth and now encompasses approximately 49% share of total U.S. drug spend. Today, there are hundreds of specialty treatments representing dozens of therapeutic categories. The growth of specialty pharmacy and the complex chronic conditions that they treat requires that Specialty Pharmacies develop a strategic communication plan for reaching, engaging, and managing patients that includes the technologies of automated patient notifications. Additionally, it is essential that all specialty pharmacy patients (regardless of age, therapy, or health literacy) understand and adhere to their treatment plan.



While the currently utilized one-on-one, high-touch patient engagement programs that the Specialty Pharmacy marketplace is built upon are successful and essential, alternative communication tools can and should be incorporated that focus on improving patient adherence, operational efficiency, clinical outcomes, and the overall patient satisfaction. Throughout this report, we will share the use cases and results of one very successful Specialty Pharmacy.

METHODOLOGY

MarkeTouch Media (“MarkeTouch”) has assisted healthcare organizations with patient engagement technology solutions since 2001. Amber Specialty Pharmacy (“Amber”) has been servicing the unique needs of specialty pharmacy patients and their providers since 1998. Due to the aforementioned growth in specialty medication utilization, Amber recognized that the entirety and continuity of patient contact was requiring significantly more personnel hours. Additionally, Amber was seeking improvements in operational efficiency through technology that improved four primary areas; patient adherence, patient experience, patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes. In 2019, Amber partnered with MarkeTouch to develop and implement a series of communication strategies that incorporated automated voice and SMS/texting. Focusing on notification types that would immediately provide the results that they were seeking, Amber partnered with MarkeTouch and began sending patients automated voice calls and SMS/texts for the following specific campaigns:

- Prescription refill reminders
- Prescription shipment notification
- Patient medication adherence surveys
- Patient notification preference and consent capture

Expected outcomes and goals for each program were established and measured. The goal for prescription refill reminders was to increase patient adherence by encouraging timely prescription refill using SMS/text messaging. Additionally, Amber was seeking to improve efficiency by providing immediate transfer capabilities to the Amber pharmacy call center team.

The goals for providing patients automated voice calls and SMS/texts related to their prescription shipment was to provide those patients the shipping carrier and shipment

detail in a timely and efficient fashion, resulting in fewer shipping related calls into the Amber pharmacy call center and higher patient satisfaction. The goal for delivering patient adherence surveys was to identify patients who were at a higher risk of non-adherence and improve their measured Proportion of Days Covered (PDC) adherence score. Patient communication preference and consent capture automated voice calls and SMS/texts were delivered to increase the number of Amber patients who utilized and engaged with communication via SMS/text messages.





METHODOLOGY

The automated voice call and SMS/text notification initiative began in September 2019. By the end of the measurement period (August 2020) the average SMS/text delivery success exceeded 92%. The individual campaigns were well received by Amber patients. The automated prescription refill reminder program resulted in a 53.3% increase in patients who initiated self-service refills using the SMS/text web link. Additional results patient adherence, patient experience, patient satisfaction, clinical outcomes and Amber pharmacy operational efficiency and program scalability results were realized.

Patient Adherence Improved

Today, there are multiple methods of measuring and calculating patient medication adherence. However, for the purpose of this report, the Proportion of Days Covered (PDC) methodology was used. PDC examines each day during the measurement period to determine if the patient has the prescribed drug on-hand. PDC has become the preferred method of adherence scoring. The Pharmacy Quality Alliance has endorsed PDC as its recommended measure of adherence, and the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has incorporated it into its plan ratings. Accrediting bodies such as URAC are even beginning to require PDC in the annual reports of accredited organizations, such as Specialty Pharmacies.

Prior to implementing refill reminder notifications and adherence surveys using automated outbound voice messaging calls and SMS/texts, Amber was realizing an overall PDC score of 0.85 for those patients with at least three prior prescription fills (during a 6-month measurement period). This correlates to their average patient possessing an 85 days' supply of medication during every 100-day period. After implementing automated outbound voice messaging calls and SMS/texts, Amber's average PDC score increased by 5.88% to an average overall PDC score of 0.90.

Patient Experience Improved

Given the increasing utilization, cost inflation, and complexity of specialty medication handling and administration versus traditional medications, specialty pharmacies focus on providing an individualized patient experience. A positive patient experience with the specialty pharmacy is critical to both patient retention as well as driving essential patient adherence and beneficial clinical outcomes.

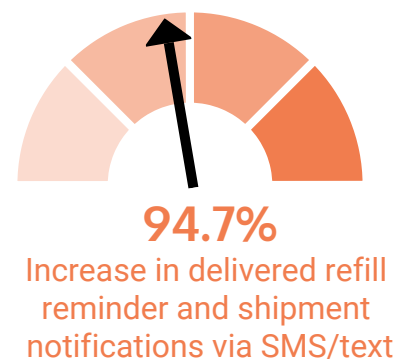
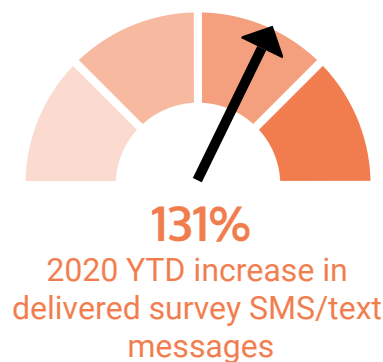
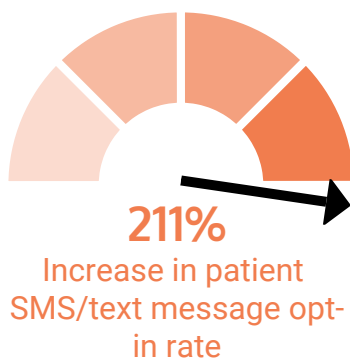
The incorporation of automated notifications as a communication strategy for specialty pharmacy is becoming more vital. Specifically related to SMS/text messaging, the majority of adults now prefer to send and receive a text message rather than placing or receiving a phone call.²

06 KEY FINDINGS - Continued

Additionally;

- 78% of consumers say receiving a text message is the fastest way to reach them for important service updates and purchases ³. 58% of consumers indicated they would view a business more positively if they offered SMS/text⁴
- Conversely, 47% stated they would react negatively if a company did not offer SMS/texting⁴
- 69% of US consumers appreciate getting texts from healthcare providers⁵

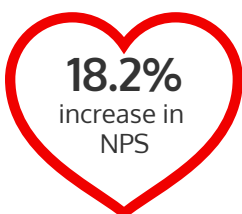
Since implementing strategically automated outbound voice messaging calls and SMS/text message campaigns



Much of the above growth can be attributed to the process implemented for capturing patients' preference to receiving SMS/text messages and the customized messages sent using MarkeTouch's patented process⁶.

Patient Satisfaction Increased

Specialty pharmacies, by design, need to maintain a high-touch, 5-star approach to service. For the Specialty Pharmacy, patient satisfaction not only ties directly to increased revenue, but is also a critical area of focus for their partners such as payors and pharmaceutical manufacturers.⁸ Overall patient communication by the specialty pharmacy and how the patient interacts with the specialty pharmacy call center are key patient experience areas that drive the pharmacy's Net Promoter Score (NPS). NPS measures the willingness of a customer to recommend a company's products or services to others.



Overall NPS increased by 18.2% during the measurement period (2018/2019 versus 2019/2020). During the first year of the program (2019), patient satisfaction related to call center reachability increased by 2%. Additionally, since automated notification program inception, only 0.6% of patients have opted out via SMS for receiving additional text messages.

07 KEY FINDINGS - Continued

Relevant improvements in clinical outcomes were seen

Meet "Emily"



"Emily"* is a 57-year-old patient diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), the most common type of lupus. SLE is an autoimmune disease, causing widespread inflammation and tissue damage potentially affecting the joints, skin, brain, lungs, kidneys, and blood vessels. Patients may experience, pain, fatigue, rash, fever, hair loss, and anxiety to list just a few of the potential symptoms. When Amber Specialty Pharmacy received Emily's referral, she was being transitioned from intravenous therapy to a subcutaneously self-administered medication. Throughout 2018 and early 2019, Emily was non-adherent to the new therapy missing a sum total of 101 days of therapy (PDC .696) for a variety of reasons including, routinely not being able to be reached by phone call by the Amber Call Center agents. When finally reached for follow up, Emily noted that her lupus symptoms were more prominent. Therefore, in October 2019, Emily was enrolled in the automated refill reminder campaign program. Subsequent to enrollment, Emily has been 100% adherent to her medication, and her lupus symptoms have improved. As a result of being enrolled in automated outbound voice messaging calls and SMS/texts, patients like Emily are more likely to refill their

**Patient is an actual Amber Specialty Pharmacy patient whose identity has been changed for privacy.*

Scalability and operational efficiency outcomes

While initially focused on patient outcomes, satisfaction, Amber was also able to realize improvement in operational efficiency and program scalability. As a direct result of implementing automated outbound voice messaging calls and SMS/texts, Amber's specialty call center agents realized:

↓ **26%**

Reduction in agent initiated outbound patient calls

↓ **60%**

Reduction in non-therapy related inbound patient inquiries

1521

Total number of call center agent hours reduced

Additional program success was measured by a 53.3% increase in patient self-service refills from the beginning of the measurement period until then end of the measurement period as a result of initiating the refill request via the delivered SMS/text messaging. The net 1,521 reduction in agent hours spent making outbound calls permitted the specialty pharmacy to reallocate those agent hours towards additional adherence and therapy focused duties, during the measurement period. Lastly, shipping notifications sent by SMS/text are reducing overall operational cost and effort related to misplaced deliveries and other issues resulting in prescription re-shipment.



CONCLUSION

Specialty Pharmacy is forecast to continue to consume a larger portion of the prescriptions dispensed in the U.S., so the need for intelligent, actionable, cost effective and engaging communication strategies has never been more important. According to a 2020 published report by TechNavio⁷, "The latest trend gaining momentum in the market is the increasing adoption of mobile technology for patient engagement." Automated outbound notifications are beneficial in many ways: they can be used to reach patients in the delivery method patients prefer; they can communicate important information in a personalized, direct manner; and they provide the ability to reach patients during and even outside of regular specialty pharmacy operating hours with minimal or no staff intervention. Complement the high-touch experience of your specialty pharmacy with customized outbound voice notifications and SMS/texts that have been proven to engage patients when and how they want to be communicated.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Specialty pharmacy patients want and prefer to be communicated, when possible, by SMS/text message
- Specialty pharmacies can realize immediate improvements in patient; adherence, clinical results, experience, and satisfaction by strategically implementing automated messaging campaigns
- Specialty pharmacies, patients, prescribers, and pharmaceutical manufacturers all benefit from timely, consistent medication related messaging campaigns

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