

# Effectively Managing Key Moments along the Healthcare Journey

Home to ambulance to ER to hospital to rehab to specialist to primary care physician. That's John's story — a story full of defining moments and critical touch points along his healthcare journey from heart attack sufferer to survivor.

While John had a specific story, we all are on a healthcare journey — a journey filled with clinicians, specialists, loved ones, wellness checks, emergency rooms, and so on. And while these moments have been traditionally seen as separate, we, at [Steelcase Health](#), believe they're quite connected. And patients not only desire, but we dare say "need" the connecting of the dots along the healthcare journey to receive optimal care.

Thus, two questions are posed:

- How can [patient-centered care](#) occur during all the defining points on one's healthcare journey?
- And, with all transition points, how can a patient be ensured that all of his or her medical information, care preferences, and medical needs will be communicated?

Truth be told, there are no guarantees. However, there are steps that patients and healthcare organizations can take to better manage these moments and increase patient outcomes.

## COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

The first, according to [Jim Kinsey, Director of Member Experience of Planetree](#), is communication and collaboration between providers. Community Care Collaboratives provide great examples of how healthcare organizations effectively create systems that serve.

A recent Care Collaboration survey by [Planetree](#), with 58 nonmember organizations, sheds light on what many healthcare organizations may be missing when it comes to optimizing key moments and points of transition with a patient-centered care approach. According to Kinsey, "While the study was conducted with a small sample size, it was very insightful."

## SHARED DECISION-MAKING AND PATIENT PREFERENCE

In the Planetree study, only 19 percent of those surveyed utilized shared decision-making and/or diagnosis of patient preference. A prime example of patient-preference disconnect: doctors believe 71 percent of patients with breast cancer rate keeping their breasts as top priority. The figure reported by the patients is just 7 percent. Clearly there is a significant disconnect between what doctors believe is top priority compared to patients.

Evidence provided by Planetree regarding the benefits of shared decision-making and patient preference include:

- Improves patient knowledge of healthcare choices, including potential benefits and harms
- Reduces patient decisional conflict (due to feelings of uninformed)

- Reduces patient passivity (and increases patient active engagement)
- Increases patient agreement with his or her treatment choices
- Increases patient-provider communication
- Reduces healthcare costs

## **PATIENT EDUCATION**

Healthcare spaces, whether a patient room or a waiting area, can ensure the environment also takes into account care partners and family members. “The space is a transition area,” said Kinsey, “which provides a place where patients can be educated in a single or group setting.” New technologies such as Smartphone apps or education software are great supplements. However, “these don’t replace bedside or physician education,” commented Kinsey. “Technology is playing a role in being more patient-centered, and being more patient-focused. The key is not to let the technology get in the way.”

## **THE RESULTS**

Incorporating the three-pronged approach to Care Collaboration: 1) Shared decision-making between the care provider and the patient, 2) taking into account patient preference, and 3) education to create activation of the patient in his or her own care, can help to lower readmission rates from the same diagnosis and reduce healthcare costs, while improving many other key performance indicators.

In addition, the Care Collaboration approach can enhance times of transition along the healthcare journey. Patients who are educated, participative, and informed become empowered, working in tandem with their care provider, and utilizing technology. Which when technology is embraced and managed is a great resource to not only keep track of critical information, but also enhance communication.

We understand, the three-pronged approach is a turn in the tides. However, the advantages are just too great to ignore. And my own personal experience has shown that there are already clinicians out there ready and willing to go the extra mile.

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