

The Changing Landscape of Active Patient Engagement

A conversation with Marty Callahan, vice president and general manager, Healthcare Markets, RevSpring



MARTY CALLAHAN

What are some of the biggest financial challenges you see your healthcare clients facing today?

We've really noticed two things affecting hospitals and health systems lately. The first is patient engagement—how well are you talking to your patients and how well are you getting them engaged in the entire process from pre-service to end-of-service. The second is being able to manage the financial well-being of your patients. Some of these patients qualify for financial assistance; most are looking for ways to pay their bills. Is your organization set up to handle these requests? It's critical for hospitals to be able to manage both of those processes efficiently with limited resources, staff and limited funds.

How does RevSpring help address these needs?

RevSpring provides the tools that healthcare systems and providers use to actively engage their patients. Different patients feel comfortable with different methods of communication. We offer a multi-media communication platform that includes paper-based statements and notices, electronic messaging like; email, text and interactive voice response (IVR). Today, most of what we do is aimed at self-pay revenue cycle communications. This includes billing statements, payment reminders or inbound payment tools. RevSpring's payment tools enable patients to make payments via telephone or interactive patient portals. These tools can be used by patients to pay online, or they can be used by hospital staff to take payment at the point of service or take payments through customer service activities. When patients have the ability to choose their communication method and are provided multiple ways to pay their bills they respond faster; leading to a desired financial outcome for both the healthcare provider and themselves.

Additionally, our analytic offerings optimize those communication and payment methods to get the best possible response. We help hospitals segment accounts to identify patients who are most likely to pay, those less likely to pay and those who may qualify for

financial assistance or payment plans. Utilizing data analytics to send the right message, to the right patient, at the right time leads to a more personal experience for the patient resulting in an improved financial outcome.

Can you name some areas where health systems can implement communication solutions to streamline the revenue flow?

In general, healthcare systems, such as hospitals, practitioners and clinics, all have different areas within the revenue cycle where the right communication is essential to maintain and generate new revenue. For instance, on the front end we want to make sure the patients arrive on time for their appointment which is why hospitals should have appointment reminders through IVR, email and text messaging. Patients can also pre-register through our portal to learn of pre-appointment requirements or update their personal information (i.e., telephone number, insurance, email and address). Building the right communication leads to less wasted time, a better patient experience, and more streamlined revenue flow.

As you move toward the back end of the revenue cycle, which is where most of the patient financial communication occurs, it's important to utilize data gathered at the front end. Understanding a patient's preference; how they prefer to be contacted, and where they fit in terms of segmentation (are they likely to pay; qualify for financial assistance) drives the actual communication.

Another benefit of our service is when an institution wants to bill for both professional and institutional charges on a single invoice. We help bring these fees together by creating a single invoice that identifies all the charges while making it easy to understand and pay. We created an automated remittance report across both professional and institutional payments that posts directly to the appropriate patient accounting system.

How is RevSpring meeting the demands for the changing patient communication landscape?

We are doing some things that are revolutionary in the industry. At RevSpring, we created workflow-related tools around our services like using segmentation and scoring methodologies to understand when and how to communicate with a patient while automating related processes. When using this kind of workflow solution a health system never has to decide how to communicate, when to communicate, what type of communication should be sent and from whom to collect a payment. This turnkey system is provided as an outsourced SaaS (software as a service) solution. Typically, healthcare providers do not have access to solutions like this due to the cost of software and the ability to support such a system internally.

For instance, one problem healthcare systems have today from the business office perspective is that they just don't have the right

Enhance the Patient Experience. Optimize the Revenue Cycle.



set of tools to automate collections and communication workflows.

RevSpring assists a hospital's revenue cycle process from pre-registration to billing. At registration, we learn the patient's identity, and we utilize a predictive score to segment that patient's ability to pay. Once insurance has been adjudicated and we predict the patient's likeliness to pay is high, we could send out an automated message (email or text) to the patient reminding them that their insurance company has paid its portion of the bill and that the remaining balance is correct. In this situation we help the hospital create an efficient workflow to expedite the payment process before a paper statement is dropped in the mail.

We've found this approach to be successful with our clients for a number of reasons. First, hospitals don't want to receive many inbound phone calls relating to bills. This type of call puts a strain on customer service staff. Secondly, our system creates more clarity around the bill (we want patients to experience greater confidence that their bill is correct and to be more satisfied as they read their invoices). And as postage costs continue to rise, the less physical mail sent expedites cash flow and lowers costs for the healthcare system.

Can you discuss the future of communication engagement strategies to improve financial outcomes?

When we think about the future, there are many other companies that are taking communications to another level within the retail environment. We know with consumerism there is more of a retail flavor entering the healthcare marketplace. The more data we can capture about a patient and their interactions, the more we can interact with them in real time. Additionally, the more we can use pa-

tient centered data for predictive modeling we can better determine the right kind of communication for the right person. This is where we see healthcare and communications moving in the future, and ultimately, the automation of communication in a one-to-one fashion.

We will continue to be able to automate messages and discover how consumers respond to email versus text messages versus telephone calls versus paper. While we have patients captive on our payment portal or in a patient portal we will be able to tailor specific messages to the individual—one-to-one-type marketing as well as enact real-time decisions on what kind of content to present and when. It doesn't matter if messaging is aimed at financial services in a healthcare setting or at consumers shopping for healthcare services (i.e., where to get a knee replacement) we will continue to leverage technology to drive messaging to a more consumer-based methodology.

And what are its implications for healthcare providers as well as for overall patient care?

Technology is providing great opportunities for healthcare providers to improve patient care and patient interaction.

Consumerism is driving healthcare more now than it did in the past. For providers, being able to interact with patients in a more relevant manner can create greater patient satisfaction and improve outcomes. For example, after a patient receives a hip replacement, her physician may want to follow up after surgery regarding post-surgical issues (infection, therapy, etc.). Follow-up communication plays an important role regarding the patient's recovery, health and their overall satisfaction with the procedure.

Communication also will play an important role in Meaningful Use requirements. The enablement of multiple communication technology will assist healthcare providers to improve patients' health. For instance, a 50-year-old male who has not had his annual physical, might receive a proactive email from his physician informing him that it is time to come to the office for his exam. Proactive notifications like these would improve patient-physician communication and lead to a healthier patient population.

These are just some of the ways we see how enhanced messaging and automation can help healthcare providers improve financially as well as improve patient care.

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