INTELICHART

The Complete Guide
to Simplifying

Practice
Workflows

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| Introduction to Simplifying Practice Workflows

Electronic health record (EHR) systems are invaluable assets for patients and providers alike. They offer fast, easy access to real-time health records and eliminate the need for inefficient, outdated paper recordkeeping. EHR technology was first introduced in its earliest form in the late 1960s. This was one of the first (and most effective) attempts to streamline practice workflows.

Although EHRs have evolved tremendously since then, the reality is that they are still terribly inefficient. Despite the widespread adoption of EHR systems, a number of healthcare providers are dissatisfied with them and would like to see substantial improvements or even a complete overhaul.

According to a Stanford Medicine survey, seven out of 10 physicians (71 percent) feel that EHRs greatly contribute to physician burnout. On top of that, four out of 10 (40 percent) believe there are more challenges than benefits associated with EHRs. Plus, nearly half of office-based physicians (49 percent) think using an EHR actually detracts from their clinical effectiveness.

For practices to not only save time but also improve the patient experience, it's critical to streamline workflows wherever possible—and clearly EHRs alone aren't doing the trick. If you're struggling with complex workflows in your own practice, this guide will walk you through everything you need to know to make real, meaningful change that translates into better patient care.

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Common Workflow Challenges That Healthcare Organizations Face

Healthcare practice efficiency is essential to delivering top-quality patient care. However, practices face a myriad of workflow challenges, both pre-and post-appointment, that can get in the way.

Pre-Appointment Challenges:

- **Scheduling the patient:** Patient scheduling is one of the most important operations in a practice—but in many cases, it's also the least efficient. Manual appointment scheduling is not only inconvenient for patients, but also for practice staff. It makes it challenging to maximize physician schedules, often resulting in them being overbooked and burned out or gaps between appointments that decrease productivity and revenue.

- **Verifying eligibility:** Manually verifying insurance eligibility can lead to an increased number of non-payments and patient dissatisfaction. Plus, eligibility verification can be a lengthy process that takes time away from more important tasks and time spent with patients.

- **Filling out necessary forms:** The old school method of requiring patients to fill out paper forms is tedious and inefficient. Not only does this lead to longer wait times and unhappy patients, but also manual data entry that can result in overworked staff and avoidable human errors.

- **Reminding patients of appointments:** Nobody likes a no-show, but it's hard to blame patients when there's no sufficient process for sending reminders. Of patients who have missed appointments, 52 percent said it was simply because they forgot to attend or cancel—which could easily be avoided with an automated reminder. Manual appointment reminders either result in staff spending hours making phone calls or skipping this step entirely.

- **Collecting payments due:** 90 percent of healthcare providers still use manual and paper processes for patient collections. This results in slower, less successful payment collection, lost revenue, overworked staff, and worst of all, confused or frustrated patients.

Post-Appointment Challenges

- **Post-appointment follow-ups:** Following up with patients after appointments is crucial for sharing discharge instructions, ensuring care plan adherence, and answering questions. Post-appointment workflows are often overlooked, resulting in the need for staff to perform cumbersome manual outreach that can lead to undesirable patient outcomes.

- **Collecting satisfaction surveys and reported outcomes:** Manually collecting satisfaction surveys and patient-reported outcomes is inefficient and often ineffective. Paper surveys are outdated and much harder to collect from patients. Plus, the process of distributing, collecting, and organizing patient data is time-consuming and error-prone.

- **Ongoing patient communication:** Communication between appointments is essential for population health and value-based care initiatives, as well as improved patient outcomes. Practices should proactively reach out to patients to ensure they're fulfilling referral appointments, taking medications properly, and complying with physician advice. However, because practice staff are so busy managing all of their other manual processes, this is either done ineffectively or not at all.

How Complex Workflows Impact Your Patients and Practice

So, how exactly do complex workflows impact your patients and your practice?

Require more manpower or added stress for current staff: This often results in poor patient satisfaction because practice staff have too much on their plate to provide an optimal experience. It can also lead to increased staff turnover because an overly stressful work environment may cause them to look elsewhere.

Increased volume of no-show appointments: Without a process in place to ensure appointment reminders are sent out in a timely manner (and in a preferred contact method), patients may forget they have an appointment. This can mean loss of revenue, failure to maximize practice proficiency, and increased idle time for doctors when there are gaps between appointments.

Deprioritization of post-appointment follow-up: Overwhelmed practice staff will be more prone to deprioritize or discontinue post-appointment follow-ups altogether. This can ultimately lead to decreased quality measures, lower compensation, and reduced patient outcomes.

Decreased patient loyalty: This can result in negative reviews that impact the brand or image of a practice—not to mention a lower volume of new patients, either due to unfavorable internet ratings or feedback from friends. Plus, when patients are less loyal, they're more likely to jump ship for another practice. In fact, 80 percent of patients reported that they'd switch providers for "convenience factors" alone.

Streamlining Practice Workflows to Work More Efficiently

The problems are clear, but finding the right solution to address them can be easier said than done. The answer lies in automation technologies.

Both patients and providers benefit greatly from workflow automation. By automating workflows with tools that integrate with your practice management and EHR systems, you can improve operational efficiency and spend more one-on-one time with patients. But not just any technology will do.

The key to making this successful is to implement an orchestrated patient engagement platform, or one with tools that seamlessly work together to address and automate all stages of the patient journey.
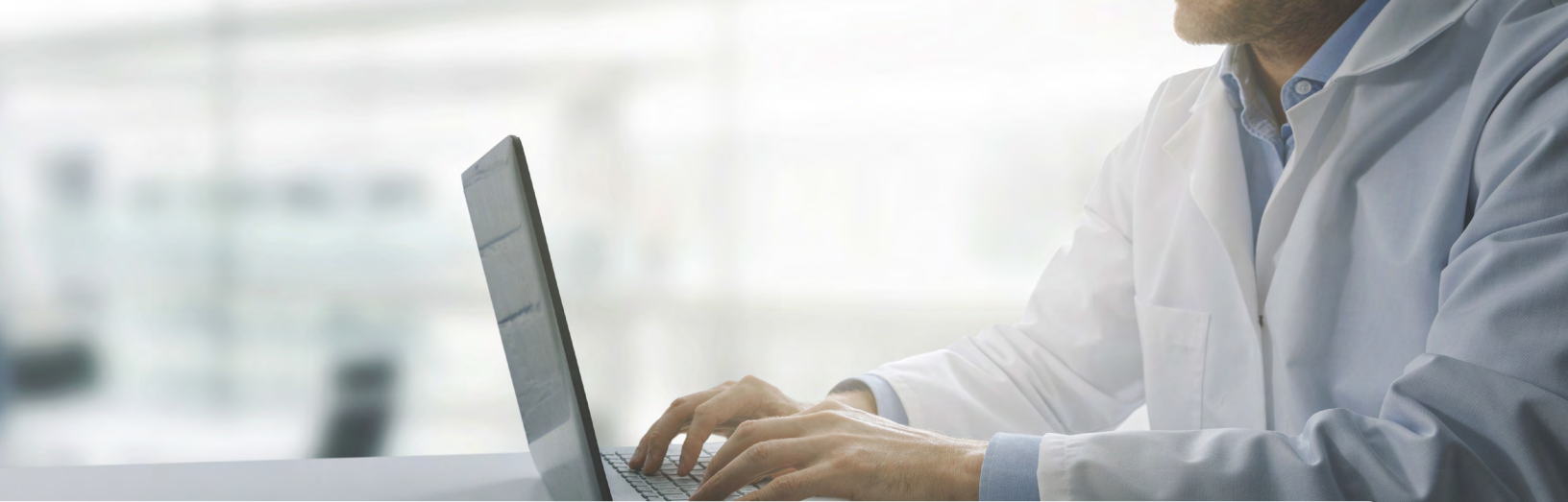
Orchestrated patient engagement solutions automate each of the pain points that practices are facing when it comes to workflows, such as:

Online Appointment Scheduling

With the right online scheduling tools, patients can either request appointments or completely self-schedule within parameters set by the practice. This not only reduces the number of people who call to make appointments, but also offers patients a convenient way to schedule them on their own time. This convenience is very important to the modern healthcare consumer. In fact, 68 percent of patients said they were more likely to choose a practice that allows them to book, change, or cancel appointments online.

Patient Portal

Today, most practices are already using some form of a patient portal. In fact, 90 percent of healthcare organizations offer portal access to patients. That said, many patient portals are missing the mark and lacking the most useful features. A portal should serve as a practice's digital front door for engagement and provide a brand-consistent experience for patients. To do so, it should have features like a user-friendly interface, secure messaging, remote visits, and complete health information accessible via mobile app or favorite browser.

Automated Appointment Reminders

Seventy percent of patients are more likely to select a practice that offers appointment reminders via text, email, or phone call. By automating appointment reminders, you can reduce patient no-shows and the manual efforts of practice staff, which streamlines workflows and improves efficiency.

Digital Forms

Digitizing and automating patient registration and intake eliminates waiting room backlogs and the headaches that come with paper forms. Once an appointment is scheduled, the appropriate forms are automatically sent to the patient, and when completed, they import directly into the EHR. This workflow saves staff from scanning each form and eliminates the need for redundant data entry.

Online Surveys to Collect Feedback

Automating surveys allows providers to proactively reach out to patients after visits. This then triggers automated events based on patients' survey responses, helping practices intervene when necessary. For example, a patient indicating that they're experiencing painful symptoms after an appointment can trigger an automated call, text, or alert to practice staff.

Ongoing Patient Management

Keeping patients engaged between appointments is critical, especially in this era of population health and value-based care. An automated patient health management tool helps practices easily identify patients who are at lower risk for adverse events. This frees up care managers to conduct intensive interventions with high-risk patients as needed, improving outcomes all the way around.

To truly maximize workflows, these tools must not only work together, but also seamlessly synchronize with your practice's EHR. That's why a solution suite that orchestrates patient engagement is so beneficial for practices looking to simplify operations across a number of touchpoints. It all comes down to how well solutions talk to each other and share data.

Data should be real-time and bi-directional, meaning that updates on the provider's systems and from the patient side automatically synchronize. This reduces frustration and inadequacies, driving significant process improvements. For instance, when you confirm an appointment via text, that appointment is confirmed in the patient portal as well.

How to Get Buy-in from Key Practice Stakeholders

Although implementing tools that simplify can prove very beneficial to both the practice and the patient, getting internal buy-in can sometimes be a difficult process. The hassle of implementing a new tool and training everyone on how to use it is too great—or it can at least appear that way.

Humans in general are resistant to change. Your practice staff is probably comfortable with their current process and might not recognize the need for changes at all. They are already using a tool that, in their minds, automates some of these processes.

Follow these tips to help get key stakeholders on board:

- **Survey practice staff's current pain points**. What processes are impeding staff from working more efficiently?

- **Listen to everyone's concerns**. What are their hesitations about moving forward with a new solution?

- **Educate stakeholders on the benefits**. Fill your practice staff in on how the new tools will benefit the practice as a whole, even if they won't directly impact everyone's workflows.

- **Implement comprehensive training programs**. Reassure staff members that comprehensive training will be available to ensure they're comfortable using new tools and following new processes.

- **Find a vendor that offers a portal migration utility.** As part of the overall transition to a new portal, it is crucial to staff adoption that you work with a vendor that migrates already-registered patients to the new portal. A vendor that also configures all clinical and demographic data from the vendor system to the portal makes data transfer seamless to the organization and the patient.

Transforming Practice Workflows with the Right Technology

The right orchestrated patient engagement can be truly transformative for healthcare organizations. InteliChart's Healthy Outcomes® solutions suite allows practices to simplify workflows, improving operations and creating a better experience for patients and staff. But don't just take our word for it.

Hear from healthcare organizations using InteliChart's Healthy Outcomes® solutions to streamline practice workflows and improve patient engagement:

InteliChart Success Stories

"InteliChart's Patient Portal is well-organized and keeps track of medical information with ease. It's user-friendly, and since going live, we've experienced a steady increase in patients not only registering for the portal, but actually using it. The last one we had confused patients, and they avoided it. That's all changed with InteliChart."

–Regis Singer,
Genesis Medical Associates, Pittsburgh, PA

"InteliChart has helped our business over the past eight years. The efficiency of patients requesting their own appointments and prescription refills, as well as communicating with us through the portal, has really helped us serve them better."

–Alain Delgado, M.D.,
Neurology and Neurosurgery Associates, Winter Haven, FL

"We had previously been juggling a number of solutions from different vendors. It was disjointed and inefficient. We selected InteliChart because Healthy Outcomes® gives us multiple solutions that work in harmony, all from one vendor."

–Pam Saunders,
Director of Information Systems and Managed Care,
Carolinas Neurosurgery and Spine Associates, Charlotte, NC

"InteliChart's broad engagement capabilities and deep API integration with our NextGen EHR made the decision an easy one. Their ability to deliver a solution that meets the high demands of today's healthcare consumer with a consistent brand and patient experience across all our ambulatory practices will help us as we guide our patients to actively engage in their healthcare."

–Brett Brickey,
Chief Information Officer, Tidewater Physicians Multispecialty Group

Orchestrated patient engagement is a necessity in today's consumer-driven world. Not only does it help attract and retain patients, but it also allows healthcare practices to significantly simplify their workflows. At the end of the day, this leads to a happier staff, healthier patients, and an organized practice that runs as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

A complete suite of patient engagement solutions offers the simplicity of working with one vendor for multiple automation tools and reducing manual efforts. In other words, it's everything you, your patients, and your practice staff need within one powerful platform.

Read our free infographic to learn the ins and outs of *Why Patient Engagement Requires a Platform.*

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