

# Enhancing Patient Outcomes Through Integrated Clinical Support and Patient-Centered Care

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The 2020s have been a decade of rapid change in healthcare thus far.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the expectations of patients and healthcare employees quickly shifted. Patients increasingly demanded healthcare services they could access without traveling far from their homes, while clinical care workers began to seek out more flexible work arrangements. The combination of these forces have paved the way for a more decentralized, patient-centered system of healthcare.

But before diving into the benefits of this in the patient care delivery model, let's first talk about how we got here — and where we're going.

## From Few to Many

Until recently, healthcare systems were relatively simple organizations. Under the traditional delivery model of patient care, a hospital system typically included only a small number of settings in which doctors, nurses, and other caregivers provided healthcare services. Most often, these systems consisted of one or multiple large hospitals and several medical offices. If a patient needed to attend an annual physical or undergo a procedure, they were forced to travel to one of these facilities.

In recent years, however, this model has shifted. The new model, called ambulatory care, enables healthcare systems to direct patients to the expertise they need without them needing to travel to a hospital. Ambulatory care settings include:

- Surgery centers
- Urgent care facilities
- Specialty clinics, such as dialysis centers
- Physician offices
- Retail clinics
- Mobile care services

This revolution in the relationship between a patient and their healthcare provider of choice can be traced back to advancements in medical record technology.

## One Patient, One Record

Today, patient records can be easily accessed by healthcare providers using electronic medical record systems (EMRS). When a patient arrives at an ambulatory facility within a healthcare system whom they have visited in the past, front desk personnel can pull up their record within only a few clicks.

The ease with which patients can move between facilities within a single healthcare system makes ambulatory care possible. Take, for example, a patient with a [CIPD illness](#). This patient makes routine visits to their primary care physician, whose practice is a part of a larger healthcare system. During one of these visits, the doctor could recommend that the patient begin intravenous immunoglobulin therapy.

In the past, this simple recommendation could quickly become complicated. The physician's office and the [infusible care](#) clinic would need to get in contact and arrange a transfer of the patient's records. It was an inefficient and error-prone process. These days, however, the doctor could direct the patient to a clinic within the healthcare system. Clinical care workers at the clinic can easily access and update the patient's records, allowing the physician to monitor their progress over time.

It's a much more seamless experience. And both patients and physicians are reaping the benefits. Here's how.

## It's Helping To Lower Medical Costs



Healthcare in the United States is enormously expensive. In fact, [four out of 10 Americans](#) have some type of healthcare debt. Lower income Americans are disproportionately impacted by these high costs.

Ambulatory care has the potential to lower healthcare costs by cutting down on the amount of time patients remain in hospitals. This is particularly important for surgical procedures, which have traditionally taken place in an inpatient hospital setting. Many modern healthcare systems now include ambulatory surgical centers, in which surgeons perform the procedure and release patients within the same day.

The cost savings of outpatient surgical services is undeniable. For example, studies have shown that outpatient knee and hip replacement procedures are, on average, 30 to 40 percent less expensive than those performed in an inpatient setting. While there is still much work to be done in reducing healthcare spending, the cost savings from outpatient surgery alone is certainly promising.

## It's Preventing Hospital Overcrowding

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the limitations of the healthcare systems nationwide. Many hospitals simply did not have the capacity to handle the massive influx of patients they experienced in the pandemic's early days. Some were forced to set up beds in parking lots and local schools.

Although healthcare systems can't have a plan in place for every catastrophic event, the new model of care delivery has the potential to lighten the load during times of peak capacity. Rather than turning away patients who are experiencing non-life threatening conditions, such as the need for [stress management](#) assistance, hospital systems can instead direct them to a separate facility within the network capable of meeting their needs.

By having alternatives available for patients, hospital systems have the flexibility they need to handle periods of unexpectedly high demand.

## It's Helping To Reduce Turnover Among Clinical Care Employees

Workforces remain unstable at healthcare systems across the country. Nurses, medical assistants, and other clinical care workers are experiencing burnout at unprecedented rates and are choosing to leave the profession entirely.

These high rates of employee turnover are unsurprising given the nature of the work. Many healthcare employees regularly work 12-hour shifts. Oftentimes, this includes switching from day shifts to night shifts weekly. The work itself is also stressful and high-demand. Fortunately, outpatient care offers some level of relief for overworked clinical caregivers.

Unlike inpatient hospitals, nurses usually only work 8-hour shifts in ambulatory settings. The pace of work is also somewhat slower. And, caregivers have the opportunity to build lasting relationships since patients typically return to outpatient facilities for ongoing care.

The opportunity to work in a less stressful work setting with a more manageable work schedule is critical — especially for veteran caregivers whose experience is valuable for any healthcare system.

## A Patient-Centered Revolution

The next several years are poised to be exciting ones in the field of healthcare. New technologies such as AI are transforming patient care while reducing the workload for healthcare practitioners. If all goes well, it could lead to a healthier future for the country.

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