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Healthcare AI, Ambient clinical intelligence

Rebuilding trust to empower the future of healthcare

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Loss of trust in healthcare providers represents a key challenge for health systems. Patients must trust in their providers and providers must trust in their patients—or both the relationship and the outcomes will suffer tremendously. Rebuilding trust hinges on understanding what's driving this erosion in relationships and taking the necessary steps to address the causes. Conversational AI and other voice technologies are empowering health systems to do just that, and to create a foundation for improving care experiences, quality, costs and outcomes.

Trust is at the center of every important personal or professional relationship and the foundation of lasting connections. Patient-clinician relationships are no different. Relationships that are anchored in trust lead to better diagnoses and treatments, improved compliance and outcomes, increased patient satisfaction, and greater patient willingness to seek care or preventive screenings. Trust also affects payors as patients are more inclined to obtain care and treatment earlier when costs are lower and favorable outcomes are more likely.

When clinicians can instill trust and strengthen patient relationships everyone wins. That requires having the time and tools needed to listen to patients' health stories, questions, and concerns and to provide informed diagnoses. Additionally, providers must trust their patients to be honest about symptoms and adherence to treatment plans. Care teams must also trust in each other, in health system leadership, and in payors to deliver the best possible patient care.

However, according to a recent *Medical Economics* article, patient trust has been eroding for some time and is now among the top five challenges in healthcare today. Why?

Too many demands on clinicians' time and attention

It's a complicated question, but day-to-day clinical workloads appear to be one of the major causes. Clinicians have too much to do in too little time—from seeing as many as seven patients per hour to the administrative burdens that follow each encounter.

A recent UChicago Medicine study stated that, "Most physicians don't have enough time to fulfill all patient care needs." In fact, the study found that the average primary care physician needs to work 26.7 hours per day to accommodate an average number of patients. Moreover, clinicians have reported that half their day is spent on administrative work, with only about a quarter of their workday free to see patients in the exam room. Even in the exam room, physicians report spending about half of that time in direct face-to-face time with patients and nearly 40 percent on the computer entering or retrieving data. It's not hard to understand why physician burnout rates are increasing.

Detailed clinical documentation is essential for providing quality care and for a health system's long-term financial resiliency. But creating and accessing it can dominate healthcare workers' time and attention. As a result, patients can feel like they're competing for clinicians' attention and "processed" rather than cared for. That fuels frustration, disconnection, and distrust, meaning that patients may not disclose health concerns and conditions or comply with treatment recommendations. They may also seek a new doctor or — even worse — avoid medical care altogether even as symptoms worsen. Paradoxically, that can give patients a false sense of control that reinforces their sense of mistrust. A recent health equity focus group revealed that when people lose trust in their healthcare provider, there's little that can be done to salvage the relationship.

Technology solutions are restoring physician time and patient trust

For physicians to build and maintain patient trust it literally takes empathy and time – "face time" listening to patients, understanding their concerns, and answering their questions during each interaction. Focusing on the patient's story, demeanor and body language gives physicians a better and more complete understanding of a patient's status and is an integral part of determining the best and most personalized care plan.

We need to give clinicians the time they need to focus on patient relationships and enable them to fully apply the skills they spent years and fortunes developing – practicing the art of medicine and caring for people.

Technology solutions using conversational AI, workflow assistants, and ambient clinical intelligence are helping clinicians provide better care. That's because those solutions are created specifically to give physicians back the time that's otherwise consumed by administrative work so they can focus on patient care. In primary care especially, trusting long-term physician-patient relationships are essential. Over time, the bond established can become family-like with hugs, tears, cheers, and confidences that support high-quality care.

For example, primary care physicians at the University of Michigan Health-West are using mobile devices with ambient listening to capture the substance and context of each patient interaction and automatically include the narrative and details in the EHR. That frees physicians to focus on patients during exams instead of a computer keyboard and screen. UMHW also is using a single AI platform with virtual assistant, natural language and speech solutions to extend the advantages of voice-driven patient experiences through multiple channels to caregivers across their ecosystem.

More and more health systems of all sizes across the country are adopting similar conversational and ambient AI-powered solutions to empower physicians and patients and support the levels of trust needed to improve care quality, costs, and outcomes. For example, Fisher Titus Medical Center is using physician workflow assistant and documentation solutions to reduce doctors' administrative workloads and free time for patient care. Aside from the direct benefits for physician and patient experiences, its use of state-of-the-art technology enables the health system to demonstrate its innovation leadership in visible and meaningful ways. That supports physician recruitment and retention and attracts new patients.

Empowering the future of healthcare with conversational AI

By freeing clinicians to focus on patients and practice the art of medicine, health systems are making substantial progress in reaffirming patient trust and supporting care teams with everyday practical solutions to pressing problems. Conversational AI technology is uniquely adept at helping them achieve these goals, by increasing patient engagement, and establishing a secure and lasting foundation all while

improving healthcare quality, costs, and outcomes.

Tags: Burnout, Conversational AI, Patient-provider experience

More Information

Explore ACI

Learn more about the impact of clinical documentation that writes itself with the Dragon Ambient eXperience.

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About Diana Nole

Diana joined Nuance in June 2020 as the executive vice president and general manager of Nuance's Healthcare division, which is focused on improving the overall physician-patient experience through cutting-edge AI technology applications. She is responsible for all business operations, growth and innovation strategy, product development, and partner and customer relationships. Over the course of her career, Diana has held numerous executive and leadership roles, serving as the CEO of Wolter Kluwers' Healthcare division, president of Carestream's Digital Medical Solutions business, and vice president of strategy, product management, and marketing for Eastman Kodak's Healthcare Information Technology Solutions business. Diana has dual degrees in Computer Science and Math from the State University of New York at Potsdam and earned her MBA from the University of Rochester's Simon School.

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