

# The Independent Practice's Guide to the Patient Journey



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## Introduction

“Patient journey” is a term that’s been picking up a bit of steam in the healthcare industry recently. As practices grapple with how to adjust to an increasingly consumer-driven population of patients, the solution has become clear. Practices must optimize the process patients experience as they seek care – their patient journey.

In this eBook, we will provide an overview of the patient journey and ways that your practice can streamline this important process. We’ll start by defining the patient journey and its parts, before examining why the patient journey is important. Finally, we’ll discuss how best to streamline each stage of the patient journey.

**Let’s get started.**

# What is the patient journey?

The patient's journey includes a patient's experience through an entire episode of care. This journey begins with the search for a provider and ends when the patient pays their final balance. All parts of the healthcare system are involved in this process, including insurers, practices, and hospitals, among other facilities.



Typically, this journey is divided into three sections: pre-visit, visit, and post-visit. During the pre-visit portion of the patient's journey, the patient will begin searching for a provider, typically by exploring review sites, practice websites, and possibly social media. They will then choose a provider and schedule their visit, after which they'll need to go through the registration process. On the practice's side, the pre-visit portion of the patient journey is used to verify eligibility and obtain authorizations, as well as ensuring the patient's chart is prepared for their visit.



The visit portion is when the patient directly interacts with their provider, having their examination, learning their diagnosis, and creating a treatment plan. At the beginning of the visit, the patient will check in at the front desk and often be asked to sit in the waiting room until they are called back. They'll often see a nurse or medical assistant first, and then their provider. Depending on the reason for their visit, the patient may need lab work or other testing, but typically the provider will have an idea of what the problem is and will start formulating a treatment plan.

Finally, in the post-visit portion of the patient journey, the patient will continue their treatment, complete any follow-up appointments needed, and pay any financial balances after the claims are submitted to their insurance.



On the practice's side, this time is used to submit for reimbursement, provide further instructions to patients if needed, and, for smart practices, to provide the patient with a feedback survey in order to determine satisfaction and improve if needed.

# Why is the patient journey important?



**E**xamining the patient journey gives providers a better understanding of the patient experience. This understanding enables providers to improve the patient journey by personalized experiences to a patient's unique needs, streamlining their workflow, increasing staff efficiency, and improving communication between provider and patient. Prioritizing the improvement of the patient journey in this way creates more patient engagement, improving health outcomes and leading to cost savings.

## How can you streamline the patient journey?

**B**ecause the patient journey quite literally encompasses the patient's entire healthcare experience, it's important to streamline this process as much as possible to ensure patient satisfaction and engagement.

In the **pre-visit stage**, this streamlining involves making it easy for patients to find and learn about your practice, get scheduled, and provide their information. This can be achieved with the following investments:



### Practice Marketing:

Optimize your website, making sure it's attractive, user friendly, and clearly tells the story of your practice. Additionally, make sure your online reputation in general is well-managed. This means paying attention to online review sites and quickly and professionally responding to complaints to show that you take patient concerns seriously.



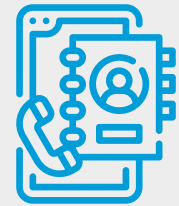
### Online Scheduling:

Convenience is incredibly important to today's patients and the ability to easily schedule appointments through your practice's website will demonstrate to patients that their time is valued.



### Appointment Reminders:

Patients are busy, too, so help them out by sending convenient appointment reminders. As a bonus, this will also help you to be sure your schedule stays full so as not to lose out on revenue.



### Digital Intake:

Your patients want to complete tasks at their own convenience, and you want to have accurate information about your patients' health and history. Eliminate the clipboard of forms and implement digital intake. Your patients will appreciate it and you'll have everything you need directly loaded into your EHR.

In the **visit stage**, streamlining the process involves making sure that the visit progresses as efficiently as possible to honor your patient's time and keep your practice moving. To streamline the visit stage:



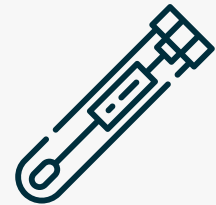
**A**udit your practice's workflow to determine what can be simplified and make improvements accordingly.



**E**nsure you're using the best possible EHR for your practice's workflow and find other ways to streamline documentation, such as voice recognition software.



**I**mplement a robust telehealth solution so that patients have the option to attend their visits virtually when feasible.



**I**f a patient is likely to need lab work in order to make a diagnosis, ask them to get that testing done prior to their appointment so that all pertinent information is available during their appointment.

Finally, in the **post-visit stage**, streamlining is focused on billing and further communication with patients. To make this stage as seamless as possible, consider the following:



**O**ptimize your patient portal to allow for convenient communication between patients and providers.



**I**mplement mobile payments so that patients can conveniently pay their balances.



**I**ssue eStatements to save on time and postage.



**F**ind a robust referral management solution to ensure a smooth continuum of care.



**D**istribute patient satisfaction surveys and take action on the insights you gain.

No matter which part of the patient journey you are streamlining, always remember that the goal is to make this process as convenient for your patients as possible in order to keep them engaged in their care.

# Conclusion

Telehealth was put to the test when the pandemic began and seems to have proven itself worthy of remaining a part of our healthcare arsenal. While some stakeholders might see challenges with its use, these challenges are easily addressed and the many benefits that telehealth can help us realize make it a worthy task. Yes, there may be changes to reimbursement on the horizon, particularly in comparison to what was available during the heaviest times of the pandemic, but the cost savings, convenience, and

satisfaction among both patients and providers certainly make telehealth a worthy investment. This is why MicroMD offers Medpod, a unique teleradiology platform that enables healthcare providers to extend reach, redistribute resources, build volume, and transform their business by advancing the science of virtual care, reducing costs, and improving outcomes. Interested in learning more or ready to sign up? Visit [micromd.com](http://micromd.com) or call 1-800-624-8832.

## About Henry Schein MicroMD

Henry Schein MicroMD, a subsidiary of Henry Schein, Inc., provides simple yet powerful e-Prescribing, EMR and Practice Management solutions that facilitate the delivery of superior patient care, automate incentive and quality reporting activities, and streamline operations for today's busy providers. Full-featured, time-tested, and budget-friendly, MicroMD EMR is 2015 Edition CEHRT certified software that helps small practices, large medical groups, community health centers, and billing services accelerate progress toward a paperless environment and health information exchange with minimal disruption and stress. Learn more at [www.micromd.com](http://www.micromd.com).

