

EnlivenHealth™

# A Revolution in Patient Engagement and Health

How Digitization and COVID-19 are Accelerating the Adoption of Technologies and Delivery Channels that Improve Patient Engagement, Adherence and Lifelong Optimal Health



Healthcare is experiencing a revolution in real time. After years of relatively sporadic change, 2020 will be remembered for its truly transformative nature. With COVID-19 as the catalyst, healthcare organizations in every sector have accelerated their adoption of digital technologies and delivery channels, overturning traditional practices and limitations in the process. The question now becomes: “What’s next?”

In finding bold solutions for meeting patient needs and ensuring organizational survival during the pandemic, healthcare leaders and policy makers have also created an unprecedented opportunity to build the systems and processes needed to promote the lifelong optimal health and well-being of patients.

This paper focuses on the role that digital communications, AI-driven clinical intelligence and data-science technologies are having right now in enabling a new approach to care delivery. This new approach is more medically appropriate, personal, convenient, efficient and cost-effective, while producing better health out-

comes and exceptional business performance for healthcare stakeholders. Specifically, the paper looks at the enhanced role of the tech-enabled retail pharmacist working in coordination with commercial and public payers to meet the needs of patients and health plan member populations.

Winston Churchill once said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” No one would have wished for COVID-19, but the global pandemic has served as a forcing function for American society as a whole and healthcare in particular. Major disparities in the health of populations, persistent gaps in care services, and stubborn barriers to care coordination have been exposed and must be addressed. In addition, as COVID vaccines and related therapies roll out over the next 6 to 18 months, America will need to marshal resources and coordinate care delivery at a massive scale.

Danny Sanchez, Vice President and General Manager of EnlivenHealth™, notes: “This transformation is now occurring at a pace we’ve never before seen in healthcare, accelerated by digital technology solutions and care delivery capabilities that are already available, and ready to be deployed.”

# Long-Term Mega-Trends Come Home to Roost

Healthcare has traditionally moved more slowly than other industries. However, COVID-19 has pushed four long-term trends beyond the tipping point, dramatically accelerating transformation across the broad spectrum of healthcare sectors.

## 1 Compelling Advantages of Value-based Care

The Affordable Care Act encour-

aged organizations to engage in value-based reimbursement models which pay for quality of outcomes rather than volume of activities. Until now, adoption has been slower than anticipated and the impact relatively limited.

COVID-19 has revealed that organizations operating in value-based arrangements are more flexible and

durable. Steady revenue flow has enabled such providers to weather fluctuations in care volume without deep hits to the bottom line, while also allowing them to readily adopt new technologies, delivery channels and service lines that meet urgent health and social needs.

Providers and policy makers will embrace value more urgently going forward.



## 2 Shift to Convenient, Low-Cost Care Settings and Delivery Channels

For the past decade or more, financial pressures, regulatory changes, value-based contracts and market competition have been pushing care delivery away from centralized acute care facilities, like hospitals, toward more convenient, lower-cost, medically appropriate settings. These include retail facilities like urgent care centers and walk-in clinics, as well as home care for post-acute and chronically ill patients and independent living centers for seniors. Perhaps the biggest beneficiary of this shift is the neighborhood pharmacy.

When COVID-19 hit, providers diverted care delivery away from hospitals and skilled nursing facilities toward those decentralized settings. While the volume of acute procedures at hospitals is now returning to pre-COVID levels, it is likely that patients and providers will now see hospitals as a less appealing and less safe option for non-acute care. Their confidence in convenient, retail settings for care will grow exponentially. The highly trusted, accessible and affordable neighborhood pharmacy will only become more important in delivering healthcare during the COVID-19 era and beyond.

## 3 Expanded Use of Digital Technologies

Digital technology has transformed nearly every sector of society and the economy. Yet, adoption in healthcare has been stubbornly slow.

The pandemic has forced a massive ramp-up in digital technologies and channels to ensure patient access and safety, especially through telemedicine visits and online communications. For consumers and providers frustrated with traditional barriers to care and medical information, there is no going back. Both want and expect the tools that are readily available in other aspects of their lives to be available for healthcare. Access to care and medical information through telemedicine, digital platforms, wearables, and AI will increasingly be the norm. COVID-19 has fueled the speed and intensity of this digital shift in healthcare.

## 4 Intensifying Care Needs of the Chronically Ill, Medically Underserved and Seniors

For years, chronic illness has absorbed ever-greater financial and care delivery resources, especially among the growing population of seniors. More recently, we're also beginning to recognize the significant care and societal needs of populations with high social determinants of health (SDoH).

COVID-19 hit chronically ill and senior populations hardest, and has exposed care gaps and health dangers with-

in communities and populations that struggle with major SDoH barriers, including adequate care access, nutrition, transportation, housing, financial security and health education. Health plans, government agencies and providers are now giving these groups more attention and resources, even as they struggle with meeting overall health and social service needs that go well beyond acute care.

Comprehensive and holistic solutions will include increased access to primary care, preventive care, behavioral health, better medication management and adherence. It's important to remember, however, as Kimberly Howland, Senior Director of Product Management at EnlivenHealth™, observes, "population health is actually enacted on individual patients. And that requires the ability to provide personalized, one-to-one care and attention at scale. Only technology allows you to accomplish that."

Where do these COVID-accelerated and -intensified trends leave healthcare? America must reorganize and reimagine the healthcare delivery system by massively expanding access to low-cost care that is more personal, precise, timely and effective. This will require a two-pronged revolution – one that is both high tech and high touch, and capable of treating individual patients at scale.

Enter retail pharmacy, supported by digitized technology.

# The Predicament and Potential of Retail Pharmacy

Historically, the neighborhood pharmacy was an important hub of healthcare, often more accessible, trusted and affordable than doctors and hospitals. Locals readily used their neighborhood pharmacy to purchase medicines and essentials, and consult the pharmacist on various ailments, concerns and health needs. Such consultation was informal and essentially free, yet highly useful in gaining access to basic care. In return, pharmacists ensured the loyalty of their customers and increased their sales volume while serving their communities and practicing their profession at the “top of their license.”

Today, pharmacies remain ubiquitous in American communities. 90% of people in the country live within five miles of a pharmacy,<sup>1</sup> and pharmacists are often still the most accessible and trusted professionals in healthcare. Patients can't walk into a physician clinic or hospital and consult with a nurse, nurse practitioner, doctor or physician's assistant without an appointment or a wait-time with but a pharmacist is almost always available at a moment's notice.

The problem for pharmacists is that they are not sufficiently supported either financially or operationally to

provide that level of care to meet their patients' more comprehensive needs. Instead, the traditional pharmacy business model has been based almost exclusively on the volume of prescriptions dispensed, even as reimbursement levels and overall margins continue to shrink. To keep up, pharmacists scramble to fill scripts while grappling with cumbersome information systems and inefficient workflow processes that limit pharmacist-patient interactions.

In a healthcare system struggling with access, costs, and overall efficiency, retail pharmacists are an under-utilized resource already under great financial and operational strain. Yet, if we think about the four mega-trends discussed earlier, it's clear that pharmacies are also very well-positioned to contribute significantly to the overall solution if they are given adequate support and incentives.

For example, as value-based care models take root, health plans and at-risk providers will need to expand their touch points with patients, and ensure that treatments and therapies are followed so that health outcomes improve and overall costs are lowered. This is particularly true for seniors, the chronically ill and patients

on Medicaid. Since medication therapies are fundamental for that care, pharmacists can and should be better utilized to drive medication management and adherence.

Likewise, the shift to lowest cost settings puts pharmacies on the front-lines of decentralized care delivery. Though tele-visits and digital engagement and communications platforms will be increasingly important delivery channels, not every patient, condition or treatment can be managed or administered virtually. Some patients will still need to get shots, tests, check-ups or consultations in-person. The establishment of on-site clinics in pharmacies and regulatory changes that promote vaccine administration (post H1N1 and now expanded due to COVID-19) increases the importance of the pharmacy as a convenient, appropriate and affordable care setting.

The challenge, however, is to give pharmacies the capabilities, capacity and financial incentives to serve these critical functions more comprehensively and routinely. And that is where new digitized patient engagement, clinical and communications technologies are making the huge promise of pharmacy practice transformation a reality today.

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# 4 Principles of High Tech/High Touch Pharmacy-based Care Delivery

In the COVID-19 era of healthcare and beyond, the pharmacist-patient relationship will be based on four principles, supported by technology:

## 1 Tech-Enhanced Convenience and Accessibility

The geographic proximity of local pharmacies makes them convenient access points for not just medications, but also medication therapy counseling, point-of-care testing and preventive care and wellbeing support. Patients can pick up prescriptions, consult with pharmacists on a range of medication therapy and general healthcare issues, undergo tests (like the COVID-19 test), and get vaccinated – all at retail locations and during retail hours within minutes of their home. Pharmacies and pharmacists truly are on the frontlines of care delivery.

Technology can amplify convenience and accessibility significantly while also allowing higher patient volume to be managed more effectively. This enables pharmacists to get out from under the daily crush of tedious operational and administrative tasks and operate at the top of their license by focusing more of their deep expertise

on value-based care. Everyone wins – most notably, the patient.

Automated interactive voice response calls are remarkably useful in keeping patients informed while also gaining data on their health changes and recent care episodes. Refills can be automated efficiently and interactively to meet patients' specific ongoing needs. Equally important, these advanced communications systems free up pharmacists and their technicians to spend more time interacting with patients, on their care needs. The result? Healthier, more loyal patients, happier pharmacists and stronger business results.

According to Danny Sanchez of EnlivenHealth™, “The technology is smarter than us, and it’s learning all the time.” With AI, our understanding of consumer habits and behavior grows. The system learns which messages and delivery mechanisms are most effective in reaching patients. Some may respond better to phone calls, others to texts, which have an average 90% read-rate within three minutes of receipt. Still others may benefit greatly from adherence coaching and various outreach programs.

Medication synchronization is another game-changer in the pharmacy sector. With a comprehensive view of patient needs, pharmacies can fill all of a patient's prescriptions at once, synchronizing pick-ups to one convenient event each month. This simple concept has led to measurable improvements in patient adherence (up to 31% higher), better health outcomes (9% reduction in ER visits and hospitalization rates), and reduced overall costs (\$3,687 vs. \$7,480 for diabetic patients) for conditions associated with downstream negative health impact.

## 2 Personalized Engagement

In a volume-and margin-driven environment, pharmacists are overworked and under-utilized as care providers. Their focus on filling prescriptions and administrative functions comes at the expense of deeper engagement with patient needs. At times, this burdensome over-work can even impact patient safety. Preventable medication errors cost the U.S. an estimated \$20 billion per year. 37% of those errors are due to mistakes in dosage; while 11% are due to allergies or harmful drug interac-

tions. The lack of care coordination inherent in the healthcare system is considered a significant contributor to these errors.<sup>6</sup>

Bjorn Thommessen, Client Success Executive for Population Health at EnlivenHealth™ observes: “There’s a lot of room for improvement in the safe and effective use of medications. Advanced technology and better coordination are critical to attaining the vital goal of zero medication errors.”

Technologies that automate prescription fills and data entry reduce the pharmacist’s hands-on workload by absorbing routine tasks. This frees the pharmacist for higher-level services like direct patient consulta-

tions. In the process, the health of the business is also enhanced because work processes become cheaper, prescription volume increases, and customer retention is enhanced.

As Mike Cantrell, Senior Director of Regional Operations for EnlivenHealth™, notes: “Our internal analysis reveals that most pharmacies experience a one-to-one ratio in their patient churn. This means that for every unique customer a pharmacy gains, they’re also losing one. Leveraging digital technology to improve that ratio is highly beneficial to pharmacies and patients alike.”

It’s also important to direct the pharmacist’s consultation time most effectively. Information systems can

flag patients who need consultation to the pharmacist’s attention, and maximize convenience for others.

Sophisticated breakthroughs in omnichannel communications capabilities – driven by advanced digital technologies, machine learning and clinical intelligence – will increasingly enable pharmacies to understand and even anticipate patient needs and meet them quickly, effectively and safely. Given patient volume, pharmacists can’t be expected to understand patients’ holistic care needs without technological support. Digital technology makes personalization possible, enabling pharmacists to provide effective and



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timely education, coaching and interventions when necessary, and improving the patient experience and boosting retention.

Patients already have a high level of trust in their local pharmacy. That trust will grow as automated processes facilitate flawless service and enable more personalized, value-based patient engagement by pharmacists.

### 3 Optimal Health and Wellness

In the emerging pharmacy environment, patient engagement will flow from diagnosis/prescribing through fulfillment, point-of-care testing and medication therapy counseling to adherence and follow-up. But more comprehensive services are also possible.

Patients managing chronic conditions or burdened by significant social barriers to health will be supported at the pharmacy with appropriate medical supplies, devices and food. Curated meals for specific conditions like diabetes, for example, will be picked

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up with medications. Patients can also be given advice or notifications by text in a timely fashion.

Unlike sales promotions in the past, these notifications will be tailored to the personal health and wellness needs of the individual, with their habits, lifestyles and social needs taken into account. Thinking of “food as medicine” is part of a broader definition of adherence that promotes optimal health

and wellness over a lifetime. Supported by these new digital technologies, pharmacies are extremely well positioned to advance this holistic view of healthcare in which good nutrition is a vital part of the health equation.

### 4 Enhanced Coordination and Collaboration with Health Plans and Providers

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) incentivizes health plans with Star Ratings and CAHPS scores to meet an expanding array of care needs and quality measures for their members.

To that end, health plans are designing more personalized offerings to meet member needs and priorities, and even addressing the most critical social barriers to health. They are leveraging data, analytics and sophisticated technologies in their plan design, marketing and enrollment to improve quality, costs, retention and health outcomes, especially through medication adherence.





## CASE STUDY:

# Practice Transformation and Patient Engagement at Harps Food Stores

Under relentless pressure to maximize prescription volume and retain customers, today's community-based pharmacies are caught between a rock and a hard place. Harps Food Stores, however, has adopted leading-edge digital technology to support a new business model built around patient engagement, optimizing workflow and better health outcomes. As Duane Jones, Harps pharmacy district manager and clinical program director, puts it, "The biggest challenge for pharmacies today is practice transformation. We need to move beyond conventional day-to-day operations and focus on clinical care."

Springdale, Arkansas-based Harps Food Stores has a storied history as a community business. Founded in 1930 by a husband and wife who moved to Arkansas from California with \$500 to start the business, Harps expanded over the decades and became employee-owned in 2001. Today, it operates over 100 grocery stores across the South and Southwest, many with in-store pharmacies.

Recognizing the value of better clinical care, Harps shifted all non-clinical duties to technicians so that pharmacists can engage in regular medication reviews, medication therapy management, adherence coaching and outreach.

"One major barrier," Jones notes, "was making clinical care part of the workflow." Leveraging digital technology was critical in freeing pharmacists to focus on patients' health needs.

CMS does not recognize pharmacists as providers, so reimbursement does not yet reflect the clinical value pharmacists bring. However, Harps has proved that there is significant bottom-line impact in devoting clinical attention to patients in need of medication therapy management. "When you focus on patient care," Jones says, "and work with their physicians, you gain the trust and loyalty of patients and also get more referrals." Harps' efforts with Medicare patients have also helped health plan partners improve their Star Ratings.

Harps own practice transformation work was so successful that in 2017 it launched a pharmacist training program with the University of Arkansas College of Pharmacy called, MTM The Future Today.

Harps' practice transformation innovations have helped pharmacists worry less about business and more about the patient. "Our passion is the patient," Jones says. "If we can improve or save a patient's life by helping them understand and manage their disease state and become adherent, that's more important than anything else."

“Health plans prioritize their sickest members and aim to improve their health outcomes and member satisfaction scores,” said Danny Sanchez. “But they need support from providers to do so. When we identify those members for pharmacies, it enables the pharmacist to advance those goals by delivering better care to those particular plan members. Health plans see the benefits in enhanced Star Ratings, reduced costs and increased member retention.”

In other words, health plans improve their bottom line through closer coordination and collaboration with pharmacists, who have the most influence over adherence to medication therapies.

David Kirkus, a longtime pharmacist business leader at one of the nation’s leading grocery chain-based pharmacy networks and now a partner consultant at EnlivenHealth™, sees pharmacists as crucial to enabling health plans to meet their financial

goals: “The consumer doesn’t really have a relationship with their health plan, but they do with their pharmacist. And the pharmacist is one of the most trusted providers in healthcare.”

With patients/members as their primary focus, pharmacy-health plan collaboration will deepen through access to shared data, common technology platforms, and a joint focus on achieving optimal lifelong health for patient populations.

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## Conclusion: Orchestrating Patient Engagement to Drive Lifelong Optimal Health

For decades, American healthcare has been siloed, impersonal, fragmented and inefficient. The vision of seamless coordination, exceptional business operations, robust innovation and better health outcomes is now within reach. Advances in technology combined with COVID-accelerated disruption of old models are catalyzing a revolution in healthcare delivery, service and value.

“For healthcare solutions to be appealing and sustainable,” Danny Sanchez cautions, “they must benefit all stakeholders, including the patient or member, the pharmacy and the

health plan. What’s required is for all the different technologies involved to be orchestrated flawlessly.”

Given the increasing sophistication of today’s digitized healthcare and communications technologies, that level of orchestration can be a significant challenge. But, it’s essential to ensuring the optimal health outcomes that are the core of the healthcare mission. “When today’s technology works in concert, it’s constantly learning, and that leads to even better interventions and optimal practices over time,” Sanchez added.

Health plans are incentivized today

to reduce costs and improve outcomes in order to optimize quality ratings, member retention and business results. They can only achieve this with data, advanced digital communications technologies and more collaborative care networks.

The neighborhood pharmacy is perfectly positioned for this new era. With the support of the right technology and incentives, the pharmacist can be freed from burdensome work processes to operate at the top of their license in engaging with patients on their immediate care needs and their lifelong optimal health.

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### About EnlivenHealth™

EnlivenHealth™ provides the most proven and advanced technology solutions for intelligent patient engagement and communications. Trusted by a national network of leading pharmacies, the EnlivenHealth™ Patient Engagement Platform empowers pharmacies and health plans to significantly improve medication management, adherence, and safety for their patient populations. Our mission is to help you ensure lifelong optimal health for your patients and members, measurably improve quality scores, and strengthen business results. EnlivenHealth™ is a division of Omnicell, Inc. (NASDAQ: OMCL), a leading provider of medication management solutions and adherence tools for healthcare systems and pharmacies.