



# MAINTAINING PATIENT-CENTERED CARE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

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If you've downloaded this guide, it's likely because your practice is trying to figure out how to provide the most exceptional patient care within a digitally-fueled healthcare world. If your practice is feeling the pressure when it comes to finding time to navigate new medical software all while providing patients with the proper diagnosis and treatments, you're not alone.

We've created a guide specifically designed to help you and your fellow physicians achieve patient-centered care within your digitally-driven practice.

We believe that for any practice, big or small, it's essential to maintain a balance between human interaction and technology when it comes to maintaining patient-centered care—and we're here to show you why! Within this guide, we will dive into the following topics:

- 1. What Is Patient-Centered Care?***
- 2. Benefits and Challenges of Patient-Centered Care***
- 3. How Is Technology Altering The Way We Care For Patients?***
- 4. Implementing Patient-Centered Care In Your Practice***



# WHAT IS PATIENT-CENTERED CARE?

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As a busy medical organization, it's easy to think of your patients as a collective group of people whose health you're responsible for improving. While that isn't necessarily a false statement, the ideology behind patient-centered care is to care for patients on a more personal basis.

Patient-centered care is the focus of care for each individual patient, rather than the patient population as a whole. It allows you and your practice to improve the health of your patients' medical outcomes and satisfaction by increasing the quality of the patient-provider relationship.

Patient-centered care can be broken into eight distinct principles:

## ***8 Principles of Patient-Centered Care***

1. Access to care
2. Respect for patients' preference
3. Coordination and integration of care
4. Physical comfort
5. Emotional support
6. Involvement of family and friends
7. Information and education
8. Continuity and transition

By utilizing these eight principles, your practice will be on its way to a more patient-centric facility. But first, let's take a look at the benefits and challenges of a patient-centered practice.



# BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

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By honing in on the needs of your patients, your practice will have the opportunity to grow both internally (for your staff) and externally (for your patients). However, like anything else, getting the ball rolling with patient-centered care can also bring about some hurdles. Let's take a look at some of the benefits and challenges to implementing a patient-centered program in your practice.

### ***Benefit 1: Higher Efficiency***

The goal of any medical practice is to attend to the needs of patients. And, with the entire staff completely focused on patient satisfaction, many practices have found that they're able to attend to patients' needs faster and more efficiently. Why? Because when each staff member is focused on the patient, they're able to identify the needs of the patient more quickly, which can in turn lead to faster, more accurate diagnoses and treatment plans.

### ***Benefit 2: Quality of Care***

You can be sure that with a patient-centered approach to your practice's functionality, not only will your patients be more satisfied, but your employees will be as well. The structure of a patient-centered care program is such that your physicians will be able to build stronger connections with their patients—resulting in more satisfied clientele.

### ***Benefit 3: Employee Satisfaction***

Physician burnout is one of the fastest-growing issues in healthcare to date and is brought on by physicians spending too much of their time handling menial tasks, and not enough time with their patients. A patient-centered approach to your practice will inevitably bring back the attention to the patient. Which means not only will your patients receive more quality care, but your staff will find their jobs more rewarding. In short, better patient care equals less physician burnout!

***“Studies show that physicians are spending 2 hours editing and inputting data into EHRs for every hour spent with a patient.”***

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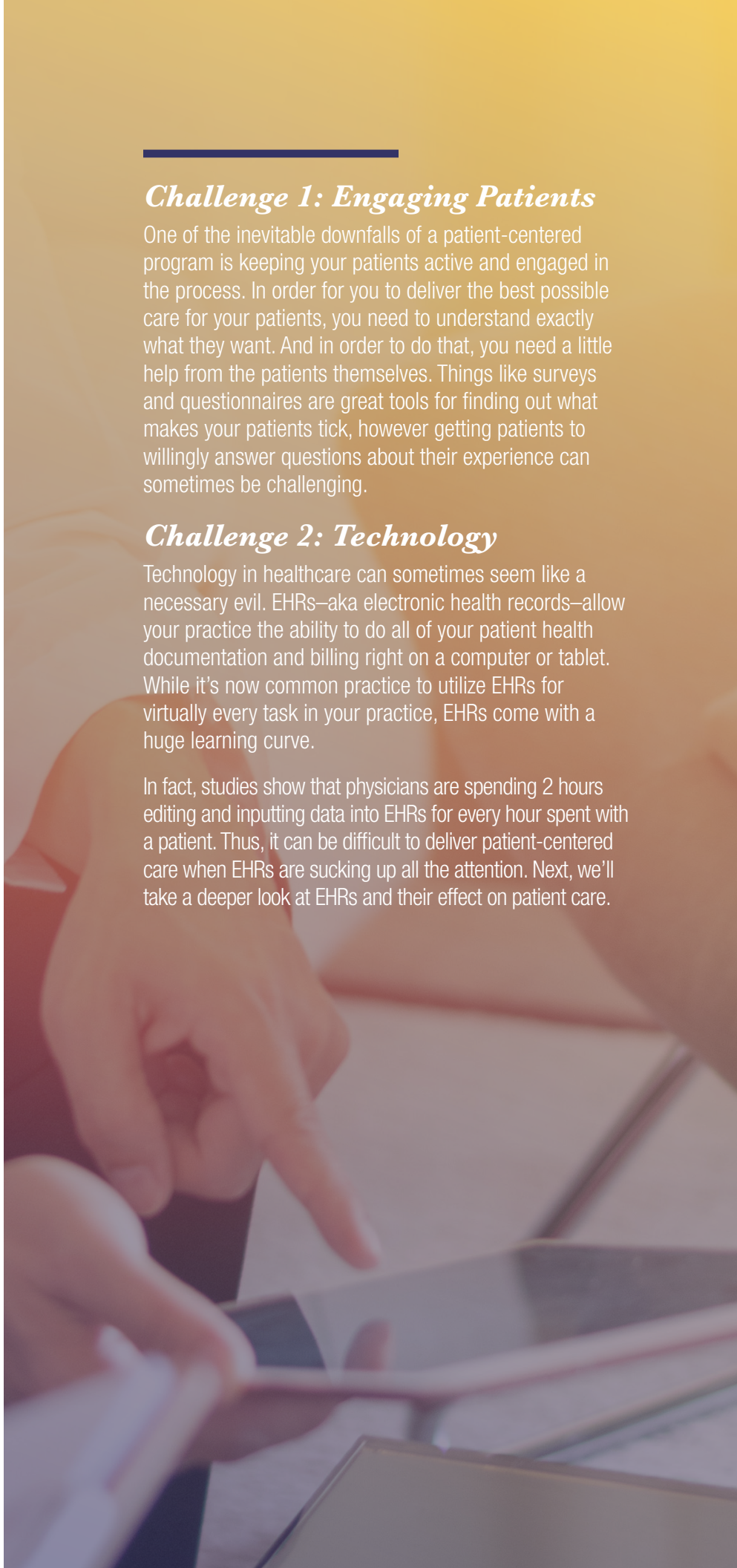
### ***Challenge 1: Engaging Patients***

One of the inevitable downfalls of a patient-centered program is keeping your patients active and engaged in the process. In order for you to deliver the best possible care for your patients, you need to understand exactly what they want. And in order to do that, you need a little help from the patients themselves. Things like surveys and questionnaires are great tools for finding out what makes your patients tick, however getting patients to willingly answer questions about their experience can sometimes be challenging.

### ***Challenge 2: Technology***

Technology in healthcare can sometimes seem like a necessary evil. EHRs—aka electronic health records—allow your practice the ability to do all of your patient health documentation and billing right on a computer or tablet. While it’s now common practice to utilize EHRs for virtually every task in your practice, EHRs come with a huge learning curve.

In fact, studies show that physicians are spending 2 hours editing and inputting data into EHRs for every hour spent with a patient. Thus, it can be difficult to deliver patient-centered care when EHRs are sucking up all the attention. Next, we’ll take a deeper look at EHRs and their effect on patient care.



# HOW IS TECHNOLOGY ALTERING THE WAY WE CARE FOR PATIENTS?

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Over the past several years, technology has made some astounding contributions to medicine. Contributions that include but are not limited to treatment design, genome editing, diagnostic tools, drug creation, digital consultation, data entry, CT scans and many more amazing things.

Within small to medium-sized practices, however, medical technology is used mainly as a means to document and store important patient data.

Long gone are the days of bulky, handwritten patient charts. Now we use what is called Electronic Health Records to input and access important patient health information.

Just within the past 20 to 30 years, we've seen patient health record systems go from filing cabinets of papers to entirely virtual systems that can be accessed by the click of a button. And, as with any advance in technology, there are both **pros and cons to the EHR system.**

## ***Pros of EHR***

- Faster access to patient records
- Interoperability
- Easier communication to billing and insurance companies
- Allows patients access to their information
- Allows patients to schedule their appointments virtually

## ***Cons of EHR***

- Complicated fill forms take longer for physicians to complete
- Not very user friendly, resulting in more time to input and edit data
- Harder to remain compliant with HIPAA's Privacy Rule, due to easier accessibility of patient records
- Less facetime between patient and provider

Learning and understanding the use of technology and its effects on the patient-provider relationship will help set the groundwork for better patient-care moving forward. Next, let's take a look at the eight principles of patient-centered care and some benefits and challenges of implementing patient-centered care in your practice.

# IMPLEMENTING PATIENT-CENTERED CARE IN YOUR PRACTICE

A cohesive strategy is a successful one. When deciding on ways to improve patient satisfaction, it's important that the entire practice be involved in the conversation. In other words, no matter what measures you take to improve the lives of your patients, be sure that the entire staff is on board and involved.

It's also important to keep in mind that the patient experience spans from the very beginning to the very end of their visit. This means that every aspect of your practice should be based around the patient from the time they walk in the door to the moment they leave. Keeping the eight principles of patient-centered care in mind, these are the steps for becoming a more patient-focused practice.

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## ***1. Understand the Value of the Patient-Provider Relationship***

As we know, patient-centered care isn't just about providing the proper diagnoses to your patients. It's also about how you interact with your patients. A positive patient-provider relationship can be broken down into three main parts:

- A. Strong physician empathy**
- B. Robust communication skills**
- C. Shared decision making**

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## ***2. Ask Key Questions***

The sole purpose of shifting back to patient-centered care is to bring the focus back into the patient and their overall well-being. In order to accomplish this, you need to know what your patients value the most—i.e. what's working for your patients and what isn't. In other words, you need to assess the happiness of your patients now before you can improve care in the future.

Anonymous patient satisfaction surveys are a great way to obtain patient feedback. You can administer surveys unobtrusively by asking patients to take the survey while they're waiting for the physician. Questions can include...

- "How long was your wait time today?"
- "How easy was it for you to schedule today's appointment?"
- "How would you rate your care on a scale from 1 to 10?"
- "Would you recommend this practice to a family member or friend?"

As an extra step, you can also ask patients how they think your care could be improved. For example, on the survey you could ask questions like...

- "What is your preferred avenue for scheduling an appointment?"
- "Do you feel patient communication could be improved?"
- "Additional suggestions?"

Just like we mentioned in the first step of this guide, allowing for communication between the patient and you, the provider, makes for a happier, smarter practice.

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### ***3. Focus on Patient Education***

Patient-centered care revolves around making sure your patients feel they're receiving the best possible care at every stage of their visit. As a best practice measure, it's important to keep your patients informed of any changes within their practice. This can be anything from changes in appointment scheduling, billing procedures and more. An educated patient is a happy one. So make sure that your patients are aware of any changes that might influence their experience. You can do this by simply sending out an email to your patients or setting out pamphlets in your lobby—anything that will allow patients to stay in the know with your practice.

### ***4. Make Patient Experience A Priority***

Once you've found out just how satisfied your patients are, it's time to take some action. The healthcare field is a field solely based around improving the health of patients. The focus of your patients needs to become a lifestyle—a living, breathing part of the practice. In other words, it's not just enough to make patient experience a priority; all other things must revolve around their experience as well.

#### **Best practices that your physicians can begin using right away:**

- Use the patient's name at least once during your conversation with them
- Explain to the patient what is going to happen next in each part of the visit
- Be attentive to the patient, don't interrupt or use a computer while they're speaking
- Look for cues that could indicate the patient is unsure of or unsatisfied with something during their visit and respond accordingly
- Always respect patient-doctor confidentiality
- Do what you say you will do, when you say you'll do it

### ***5. Utilize Your EHR For Good***

Before diving into an entirely new approach to patient care in your digital practice, consider how technology could be an issue—as well as how it can be used to your advantage when setting up your new care strategy.

A few questions to ask when determining whether or not your EHR (and the use of your EHR) is helping or hurting your relationship with your patients are:

#### **1. Does EHR make the lives of your patients easier?**

Many practices allow patients access to their own records and to schedule appointments via phone or computer using their EHR system. While this can be a great way to make your patients' lives easier, a confusing or difficult to use system could also be doing the opposite.

#### **2. Are you and your staff involved with the EHR design?**

Lack of involvement in the initial set up is a huge reason that physicians struggle to work effectively with EHR. In this case, your practice may need to consider in-depth training for you and your staff on your EHR design.

#### **3. Are you spending more time with your EHR than you are with your patients?**

Spending more time editing and charting notes than actually caring for your patients is a huge sign that your EHR is negatively affecting your practice. In this case, it may be time to outsource some of your services—such as [medical transcription](#).

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It's suggested that before your EHR system is even implemented into your practice, you and your staff undergo detailed training to learn how to properly work the system. Once you and your staff are trained on the ins and outs of the system, you can then provide care to patients promptly and more efficiently.

With the growing use of technology in medical practices, it can be difficult for patients to feel like they're being heard and understood while a physician is staring at their computer screen. At the end of the day, you wouldn't be a profitable, efficient practice without happy patients. Which is why a patient-centric approach to care is so critical. For practices that feel they're spending too much time punching notes into a computer software, there is a solution for you.

At DataMatrix Medical, we know that your electronic health record software isn't something you can master overnight. Therefore, we offer EHR documentation support throughout our partnership together to help you and your physicians better understand the software that you're using—and that we're transcribing into.

We work seamlessly with your EHR software to transcribe and document important patient data for physicians. A team of highly trained specialists are assigned to each of your physicians to transcribe their patient notes for them, allowing them to spend more time delivering patient-centered care and less time navigating the EHR software.

[Contact one of our transcription specialists](#) to learn more about how DataMatrix Medical can help you in your endeavor to deliver patient-centered care.



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