

Increasing Patient Retention and Revenue with Referral Management

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The ratio between the number of dentists and the population in USA is 61:100000. More than one in five (21.3%) said that they had not visited the dentist in the last few years. One of the top reasons adults cite for avoiding the dentist is the inability to find a convenient location or appointment time. Specifically 19% of adults who had not visited the dentist in few years because they cannot find a convenient location or appointment time. As a dentist or dental practice manager it is crucial to not just manage existing patients but to account for lost opportunity and plan to improve patient experience, especially with appointment schedule and completion. This will result in increase in the number of patients visiting dental centers. Dental centers / Dental groups can begin by leveraging technology to manage the patient referral workflow. Inbound patient referrals having dental issues usually have accompanying ailments such as diabetes or accidental injuries. A seamless experience from appointment scheduling to treatment completion will impact patient satisfaction and volume of inbound patient referrals.

Existing Patient Referral Management Workflow in a Dental Center

Did you know? In a year, 15 billion faxes are sent out with patient referral information in the USA. Practices receive referrals through fax, online forms, direct messaging, email, virtual print, direct walk-ins, and other channels. A typical dental center or dental group is a high inbound referral setup. Dental centers receive volume of referrals weekly (ranging from 50 per week to even several hundred per week) depending on the number of patients visiting the center and number of clinics sending referrals to them. An effective referral management solution will help manage small or big volumes of referrals by reducing manual tasks and using automation and structure where possible.

Dental centers usually have a dedicated team of referral coordinators who receive, accept and process the referral requests. These referral coordinators manually key in the necessary details into an EMR/EHR system and create a referral. The time spent by referral coordinator in a completely manual process can be reduced by using technology. Productivity and efficiency is increased by introducing technology to aid the process. It results in piling up requests that are not yet processed. When the referral coordinator does not have the required information to process the referral, he has to contact the referring provider. This further incurs time and results in slow referral processing rate. This, in turn has a negative impact on patient experience. Hence, patient referral leakage also becomes imminent.

Consequences of a Slow Referral Network

1. Revenue loss is a direct result of untimely processing of referrals
2. Providers stop referring to the center thereby harming its reputation
3. Waiting times and appointment scheduling process affects patients requiring critical and immediate attention

Challenges Faced By a Dental Center

1. Multiple Referral Channels: For the specialist/imaging center who receives referrals face more difficulties than the referring provider. The receive referrals through various channels like fax, email, direct message, website, user-filled forms, etc. Managing and tracking all of it manually is a tedious task. The chances of missing out on a referral are high.
2. Appointment Scheduling and Patient No-Show Rates: After receiving the referral, the specialist/imaging center schedules appointments with the patient. In some cases, the patients are not notified clearly about the appointment. When patients do not show up, it is difficult for the specialist/imaging center to track. It results in revenue loss and patient dissatisfaction.

Let us review a typical referral process to elaborate the challenges faced by the dental centers.

1. Patient Visits the PCP

Andrews met with an accident recently. He met his PCP, Dr. John immediately as he was experiencing pain in his jaw. After examining him, Dr. John wanted him to consult a dentist. The doctor then initiated the referral.

2. PCP Initiates the Referral

John created a referral in his EMR. He did not have time to do the insurance pre-authorization so he left it to Andrews. He then found a dentist and gave him referral information verbally. Now when he met the specialist, Andrews had to again elaborate his condition and problems to him. This is time-consuming for the specialist as he wastes time on the same information twice.

3. Specialist Requires More Information

The specialist, Dr. James is a famous dentist in the locality. After receiving the referral, he schedules an appointment with Andrews. After the appointment, Dr. James wants more information about the patient's history and diagnostic reports. Now, he has to wait for the PCP, Dr. John to send him the relevant information.

4. No Tracking System for Referrals

As Dr. James is a famous dentist in the locality, he receives

numerous referrals in a day. There is no tracking system for him to know how many referrals he received, how many were processed, in what status each referral is in, etc. So it is difficult for Dr. James to know understand the analytics of his specialty.

Case Study: Patient Referral Software Increased the Operational Efficiency of a Dental Specialty Clinic from Ohio By 25%

The company in discussion is a well-known dental specialty center in Ohio. They specialize in oral surgery and their center comprises of dentists and oral surgeons. This dental specialty clinic values patient relationships and the trust patients have in their practice. Their primary focus is to create an exceptional experience for their patients. The clinic receives numerous referrals from various channels. The primary channels of referrals include email and website. They face challenges in manually processing the referrals. These challenges had a direct impact on patient experience and their current referral process.

Customer Challenges

1. Insecure referral communication
2. No single system to consolidate and manage referrals
3. Difficulty in tracking the progress of referrals

Solution

HealthViewX studied this clinic's existing workflow completely and realized that the crucial part of the problem is the lack of a system to consolidate referrals. HealthViewX Patient Referral Management solution introduced the following features to meet their requirements:

1. Multi-Channel Referral Consolidation

Referrals flowing in through many channels are consolidated in a single interface. It enables easier monitoring and facilitates timely referral loop closure.

2. Referral Tracking

HealthViewX gives a clear picture about how a referral has progressed with the help of a timeline view. Every referral can be tracked with its status. With the help of customizable dashboards, the exact number of referrals waiting to be processed can be identified easily.

3. New Referral Channel

HealthViewX Referral Management solution introduced Desktop application to referring providers who did not have secure means to send referrals. It is a secure source for sending and receiving referrals. Also documents can be attached and sent as a referral.

Impacts

1. 20% increase in number of referrals processed daily
2. 25% improvement in the efficiency of the referral coordinators
3. Improved referral tracking and referral loop closure

Are you a dental center looking to track your inbound referrals very effectively? HealthViewX Patient Referral Management solution helps dental centers in managing their referral network and increasing their revenue.

HealthViewX Patient Referral Management Solution for Dental Centers

Patient Referral Management is complicated not only by the different sources but also by trying to manage all the referrals manually. The current referral management is no way close to the increasing demands of the referral process. Its inability to communicate between

the referring and the receiving ends makes it slow and non-feasible.

Considering the challenges faced by dental centers, an Electronic Referral Management Software can help them better. After the complete analysis of a dental center's referral workflow, HealthViewX realized that the crucial part of the problem is the lack of a system to consolidate referrals. On further analysis of their process, HealthViewX Patient Referral Management solution introduced the following features to meet their requirements:

1. Multi-Channel Referral Consolidation

The HealthViewX solution can capture fax, phone, email, online form referrals or any other referrals in a single interface. It makes it easy to monitor and manage all channels of referrals in a single queue.

2. Patient Coordination Framework

After finding the receiving provider, the referral coordinator refers the patient. When the receiving provider receives the referral, the provider will get notified of the referral. Even the patient will be notified of the referral. The receiving provider can schedule appointments based on the patient's comfort. This will cut down patient no-show rates.

3. Referral Tracking

HealthViewX gives a clear picture about how a referral has progressed with the help of a timeline view. Every referral has a status which conveys in which stage the referral is in. With the help of a customizable dashboard, the exact number of referrals waiting to be processed can be identified easily.

4. New Referral Channel

HealthViewX Referral Management solution supports a new channel for sending and receiving referrals. This is called the desktop application. Sources like email, website, direct message, fax, etc are not secure and difficult to handle. On the other hand, desktop application is a secure source for sending and receiving referrals. Also documents can be attached and sent as a referral.

5. Referral Data Consolidation

It has options for printing the consolidated data about the referrals and the referral history of any patient as a hard copy at any time in pdf/excel.

6. Secure Data Management

HealthViewX Patient Referral Management is HIPAA compliant. It manages all patient-related documents securely.

7. Referral Analytics

Helps in tracking the number of referrals and gives complete information about the referrals processed, missed, scheduled, etc. with the help of a Referral Data-centric Dashboard [1-3].

References

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