

Transparency for health plans: consumer engagement

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Significant changes in the U.S. healthcare system have led consumers to take a greater responsibility in their healthcare. One of the challenges of engaging consumers to undertake this responsibility is the complexity of the health care ecosystem. In responding to the need for better transparency and engagement, providers have increased their focus on patient education. Payers and providers have spent time and resources ensuring that consumers have several means to access information, such as online content, search tools, options for providers, etc. Much of the focus has been on price and metrics and while these changes are vital, they are not the whole story. Just as important is engaging with consumers in ways that encourage them to manage their own health and well-being.

Health plans have looked to connect directly with consumers through enrollment, care management and healthy living offerings. Consumers interact with a dizzying array of family doctors, urgent care providers, pharmacists and specialists. The health plan ecosystem is also complex because it includes tiered networks, pharmacy, vision, and dental benefits, government and employer programs as well as high deductible and health savings plans. In order to engage effectively with consumers and provide superior health care and service in the future, providers and plans must bring together the information and interactions that are scattered across health plans and providers. The disparate information must be gathered in a timely manner so it can be utilized to drive consumer engagement at the appropriate times. By doing so, the consumer will experience health care services that anticipate their needs and simplify their interactions with the complex health care system.

In order to achieve the next level of integrated consumer engagement, information system investments in event collection and analytics systems are being made. The goal is to bring these disparate interactions together as they occur throughout provider and health plan systems. Once gathered, these interactions are run through new analytic capabilities that can identify consumer engagement opportunities. Using these information system investments to develop relationships with consumers is critical as health plans and providers seek to deliver superior health care and service.