

Six things that patients want

And how technology can provide it

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The big question

What do patients want? This is a question that pharma is now asking in the face of an increasing focus on treatment outcomes and a growing trend of 'empowered patients' demanding more from healthcare practitioners and, by implication, the industry.

Patient-centricity may be an industry buzzword but it captures a serious effort to respond to a changing healthcare landscape. Life science companies are now actively seeking to bridge the gap between the potential offered by medical science and the outcomes actually achieved.

Understanding that this requires engagement further along the treatment pathway, new approaches and innovative technologies such as 'wearables' that bring industry closer to patients are being explored.

So what do patients want? Agnitio spoke with patients, their families, patient associations and medical professionals - uncovering six needs to consider.

Better health

It's obvious but still worth stating that people fundamentally just want to get well. The trend for patient empowerment is actually a clear demonstration of this, being an attempt to take more control over treatment and get the best possible outcomes.

Sometimes there's a temptation - especially when thinking about patient communication - to be over-elaborate. Patients want information but there's **no desire for gimmicks** or to be entertained.

So, while people don't want novelty for novelty's sake, anything that helps them get better or eases their symptoms is welcomed. And this doesn't just mean better treatments. Surrounding each product with an array of services that provide real value is a patient want that pharma is increasingly keen to provide.

“It’s about content and delivery... if you are going to provide digital information, it has to be good content. It has to be delivered in a fast and an easy way.”

Dr. Grumet

United States

"It is not easy for people to find credible information online, because there is so much available. That's why many people still rely mostly on their doctor or sometimes pharmacist."

Marc Wortmann, Executive Director

Alzheimer's Disease International

Credible information

Patients, especially younger ones, are demanding more involvement in treatment decisions. They want to fully understand their condition and the long-term care plan.

The days of a leaflet in the waiting room are still with us but far from satisfactory for people who increasingly turn to the internet - with all its problems of **often incorrect, partial and simply conflicting information**. This obviously places more demands on healthcare professionals.

It's clear that there is a role for pharma in helping patients access the credible and up-to-date information that they need. Yet just putting it 'out there' on the internet may not be enough. A more innovative use of information technology is called for to provide credible information while meeting all regulation with regard to direct-to-patient communication.

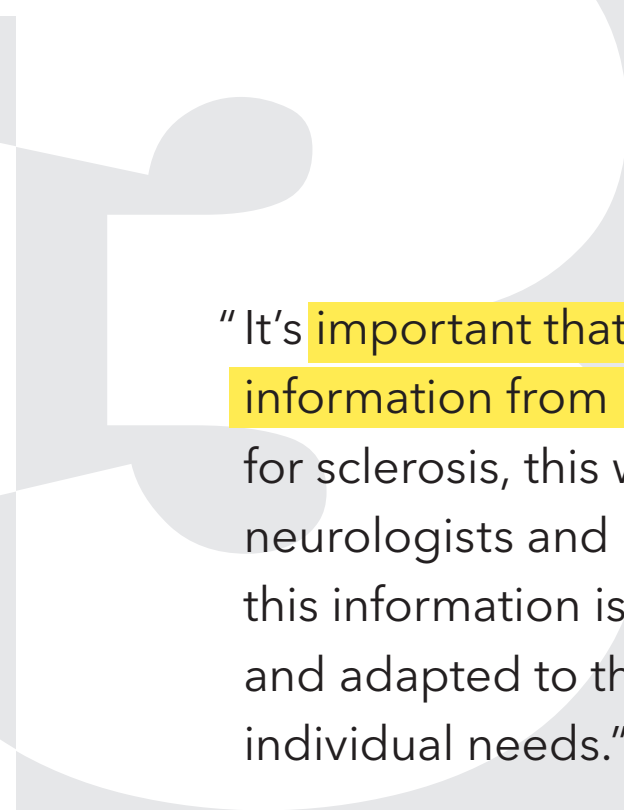
HCP contact

Patients still want direct contact with their caregivers. While they *are* looking elsewhere for more information, interaction with healthcare professionals is the priority.

Though technology cannot replace patient/caregiver interaction it can improve it. Rather than seeking to bypass healthcare professionals, there is an opportunity to **use technology to empower doctors** to improve their patient interactions.

Customer-facing staff can provide healthcare professionals with digital tools to help them explain a condition to patients. Technology can also be used to strengthen healthcare professionals' on-going engagement with patients via remote solutions and on-demand information services.

Patients want information that is credible and up-to-date. Doctors want to provide it. Using technology to 'help doctors help patients' can meet two needs simultaneously.

A stylized, light gray silhouette of a human figure is positioned on the left side of the slide. The figure is composed of simple, rounded shapes for the head, torso, and limbs. The background features large, overlapping white and light gray circular shapes that create a modern, abstract aesthetic.

“It’s important that patients get their information from professionals – for sclerosis, this will typically be neurologists and nurses. It’s vital that this information is understandable and adapted to the patient’s individual needs.”

Lasse Skovgaard

Head of Documentation & Healthcare Politics

Sclerosis Association Denmark

“As every person is different, more personalised communication based on their specific questions and needs would be beneficial for patients.”

Marc Wortmann, Executive Director

Alzheimer's Disease International

Relevant services

Much of the appeal of digital communication comes from the high degree of personalization it can provide. In daily life we routinely experience 'my newsfeed', 'my playlist' - so why not 'my treatment'?

Rather than a patient leaflet intended for everyone, digital communication can be used to provide the on-demand, real-time and just-for-you experiences that we increasingly expect.

Creating a menu of digital materials is a good start. This enables people to pick both the information and the format that suits them best. And if such materials are provided to healthcare professionals, communications can be personalized in the consulting room.

Relevance really matters in healthcare because, beyond meeting our growing expectations for a just-for-me experience, it impacts the effectiveness of the communication and helps to improve treatment outcomes with better adherence.

Family involvement

Moving the patient to the centre of operations means understanding the patient's perspective and starting to see the world through their eyes.

A positive effect of this approach is a growing focus on the patient's home life which is driving innovation in helping existing personal support networks.

One opportunity currently being explored is to empower patients with digital materials that they can share with family and friends. This helps to ensure that people are in control of what information is shared, as there are understandable privacy concerns even with family members.

Other initiatives have looked at providing the means for patients or family caregivers to connect online to pool information, share experiences and get the understanding they need. What's clear is that a holistic approach opens up new kinds of initiatives.

“I am a firm believer in the need to keep relatives well-informed. And I know from personal experience that a patient can be too emotional to take in all the information or later too affected by side effects to ask the right questions.”

Frederikke

Relative of a cancer patient

"I forgot a lot of the information.

Whether that is caused by lack of good communication or the treatment affecting me, I cannot say. However, the ones that were best at providing me with information were surgeons - they talked to me in a personal way instead of heavy, academic talk."

Minna

Cancer patient

On-demand knowledge

While direct contact with healthcare professionals is key, there are limits to what doctors can communicate in a consultation – just as there are limits to the information patients can retain.

Often people don't know what to ask, with questions only occurring to them later. Or they simply **need reminders to help them follow treatment instructions** correctly.

When designing patient communication systems, therefore, it makes sense to differentiate between information delivered in the consulting room and that which is available subsequently.

Digital technology can be employed to ensure that information is online and on-demand. With good content design, answers then can be provided to questions as and when they occur to people. It also enables an always-available store of information that patients can refer back to at any time.

About Agnitio

Agnitio is a forward-thinking technology company that opens new communication opportunities for life science companies and works to improve the relationships between industry, healthcare professionals and patients.

Our latest solutions include Rainmaker, which provides state-of-the-art multichannel HCP engagement, and Sharedoc which makes possible fully-compliant patient communication.

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Sources

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