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Digitizing the Specialty Medication Process to Connect and Engage Patients

Promoting Medication Adherence

Specialty pharmacies have experienced seismic growth of 315% over the past six years, signaling a reshaping of specialty medication channels at health systems and independent pharmacies.¹ In sheer numbers, the industry went from 378 specialty pharmacies in 2015 to 1,570 by 2021, underscoring the escalating role they now play.

The proliferation of specialty pharmacies corresponds with a growing demand for specialty drugs to treat patients diagnosed with chronic, complex diseases such as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis.

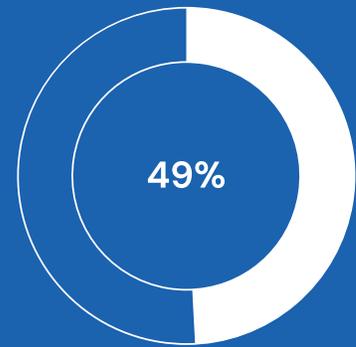
Organizations are rapidly expanding their own in-house services to ensure market access, affordability, patient support and adherence. They are, in effect, taking greater control to steer the multilayered care coordination support needed to maximize health and economic outcomes and expedite patient access to care.

However, despite rising provider involvement, these risk-based patient populations still face specific challenges related to accessing crucial drugs in a timely way and effectively managing their therapy.

Complexity Delays Time to Therapy

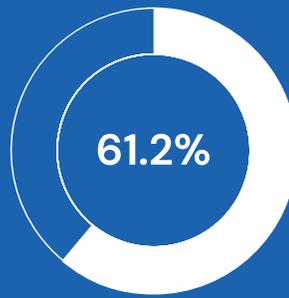
Because specialty drugs are highly complex, these costly prescription medications require additional services – special handling, storage, and delivery requirements, multi-step therapy trials, administration (typically injection or infusion), and high-touch patient care management services such as clinical monitoring.²

One widespread complaint is that the process to move a specialty prescription from intake, through the system, to the patient, is significantly more complicated, resulting in communication challenges between patients, providers and insurers.



Nearly half of Americans (49%) have experienced problems getting specialty medications, according to an August 2021 RxBenefits survey.³





Approximately 61.2% of pharmacists report experiencing a high level of burnout in practice, making it one of the highest rates among healthcare professionals.⁹

In fact, nearly half of Americans (49%) have experienced problems getting specialty medications, according to an August 2021 RxBenefits survey.³

Ultimately, the end result is an extraordinarily lengthy cycle time to secure insurer enrollment approval and administer the first prescription fill, which increases abandonment rates and affects profitability.

Navigating the complexities that prescribers must manage is key to shortening patient delivery and dispensing days to reduce overall costs.

Staffing Shortages Lead to Long Waits for Medication

Just as specialty pharmacies are expanding, so are pharmacy workers' heavy workloads, resulting in pharmacists leaving the industry in waves.⁴ Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are overwhelmed by the multitude of administration and compliance duties⁵ – including increasing vaccinations and inbound and outbound calls – contributing to these compelling statistics:



Organizations are grappling with severe pharmacy technician shortages, which, in turn, are challenging expansion plans. The majority of pharmacy admins reported turnover rates of at least 21% in 2021, with one in 10 noting a 41% or more loss of technicians.



The pharmacy workers shortage has led to days long waits for medication⁶, shortened pharmacy hours⁷ and some prescription errors.⁸



Pharmacy staff members who remain are stretched thin. Approximately 61.2% of pharmacists report experiencing a high level of burnout in practice, making it one of the highest rates among healthcare professionals.⁹



Double-digit contact center staff turnover, coupled with more than 30 to 45% of organizations reporting that they cannot locate and hire enough candidates to fill open positions, has created a crisis for pharmacy leaders.¹⁰



Pharmacist staff shortages are a patient safety threat. Forrester Research predicts that the labor shortages and turnover will result in provider medication errors doubling in 2022.¹¹

Specialty Medications Require Special Handling

Having qualified staff to administer specialty drugs to patients is a must, as these biologics are typically injectable or infused, at times in the physician's office, pharmacy or the patient's home.¹² Due to their complexity, the medications often require active clinical management during both distribution and administration.

Challenges of Specialty Medications



Medication synchronization for specialty drug management to ensure continuous prescription care, prevent interruptions in medication administration and allow patients to adhere to their treatment regimes.



Once the patient receives the specialty drug, pharmacists must ensure the patient remains adherent to treatment and monitor side effects ongoing to optimize the outcome.



Specialty drugs are vastly more expensive than their traditional drug counterparts, often costing more than \$2,000 per month per patient.¹³



Costly delivery errors can occur for specialty meds that require temperature control, or signatures to receive the specialty drugs when delivered. Little or no integration with delivery firms creates costly delays in therapy and patient calls to replace the mailed medication.



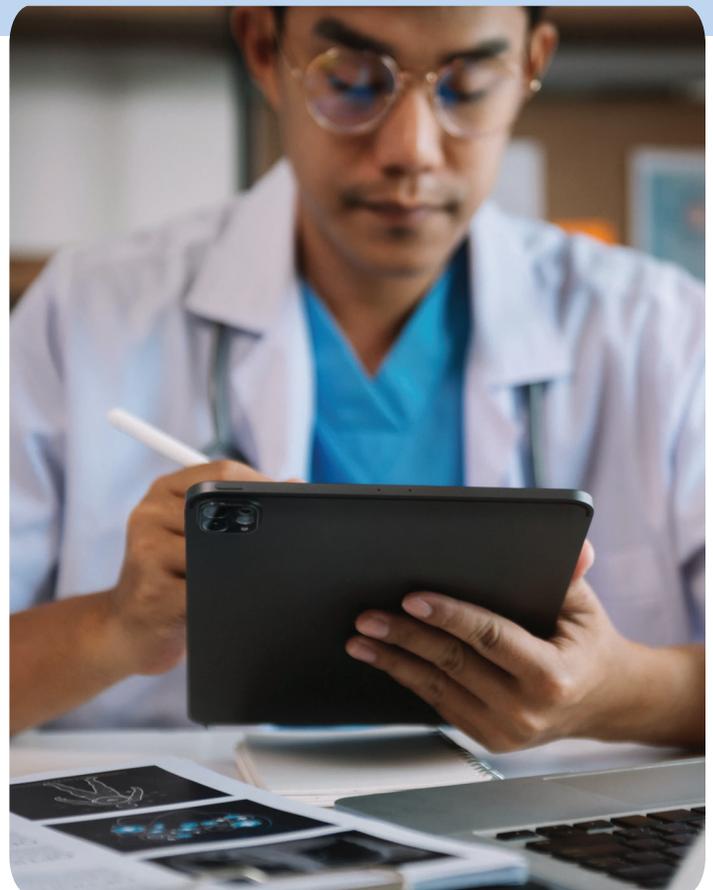
Many medication workflows rely on antiquated communication methods such as phone, fax, and paper. Failures in the system can result in an expensive replacement, delays in treatment and profit loss.

Patients Require Significant Support to Follow Their Medication Regimes

Improving patient access and adherence to specialty medications is a primary determinant of treatment success effecting the health and well-being of millions of Americans due to a number of key trends:

 A report from the American Hospital Association projected that the number of Americans with chronic medical conditions will grow by 9% between 2020 and 2030, an increase of 14 million people. Some disease states are projected to experience even higher increases in patient volume.^{14 15}

 Specialty drugs are complicated requiring precise handling and timing adherence for effective therapy. If a patient fails to comply, the medication regime must start over, leading to higher unnecessary utilization and medical costs.



 Specialty drugs require extensive patient education. Patients rely on pharmacists to understand the medication regimen, side effects and symptoms, as well as drug interaction interventions and screening. Often the drugs are administered, some by injection or infusion, or require the use of a device (e.g., blood glucose monitor) or clinician to administer. Specialty pharmacies must offer instructions and hands-on guidance to patients needing this type of support.

 Because consumers increasingly prefer the convenience of self-service, 24x7 digital capabilities, specialty pharmacies must adopt the latest digital tools to ensure effective communications leading to compliance.

Use Digital Solutions to Boost Specialty Pharmacy Efficiencies and Chronic Outcomes

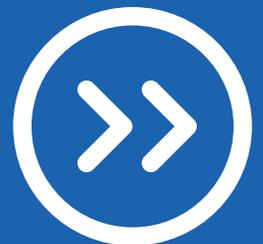
As specialty pharmacies become an increasing growth and cost management focus, hospitals, health systems, independently owned pharmacies and other organizations must quickly embrace advanced artificial intelligence (AI)-powered digital solutions. These game-changing tools dramatically improve care coordination throughout the complex medication management process to simplify the patient's outpatient drug regime and ensure medication adherence and optimal outcomes.

Numerous areas destined for digital automation include, but are not limited to:

-  Eliminating high-cost specialty medication waste throughout the course of therapy via preset timestamped delivery coordination
-  Streamlining operational workflows and throughput
-  Improving medication adherence by proactively engaging patients through their preferred communication channel
-  Reducing telephone calls



Chatbots cover diverse facets of pharmacy care. The following are key capabilities to look for when selecting a chatbot for outbound outreach communications connecting the patient, provider and specialty pharmacy team.



What to Look for in a Specialty Pharmacy Healthcare Chatbot



1



Self-service Options

Enhance the patient experience offering easy 24/7 online tools that provide abilities to request a prescription refill, upload an updated insurance card, or conduct an on-demand virtual visit to address problems such as side effects.

2



Patient Campaigns

Create and disseminate awareness campaigns via a custom chatbot to target groups for refill notifications and reminders and to capture both the request and the need to probe or escalate the patient's reason or inaction for nonadherence.

3



Remote Patient Monitoring

Schedule regular patient check-ins and escalate non-completed questions requiring answers to the appropriate pharmacist for follow up.

4



Optimize Delivery

Integrate pharmacy distribution with delivery companies. Support remote package special handling and customer service requirements.

5



Signature Capture

Capture digital signatures. Patients, providers, and pharmacists can electronically sign important documents when needed and avoid slowing down drug distribution.

6



Pharmacy Integration

Integrate to the organization's pharmacy system. Extend your patient outreach further automating routine outbound communications.

7



Patient Satisfaction Surveys

Stay in close contact with patients during treatment soliciting feedback to fast-track addressing concerns or questions.

8



Patient Education

Share downloadable hyperlinks to helpful education resources, content and videos to supplement and reinforce staff-provided care and medication education to drive patient adherence and overall health.

9



Rapid Responses

Deploy chatbots to respond to a patient's questions concerning therapy onboarding, prescription refills, etc., at all hours of the day or night.

Make the Digital Transformation

Armed with QliqSOFT's chatbots and other virtual care services, specialty pharmacies can nurture and build long-lasting relationships with their patients. To learn more about how our digital innovations support the complexities of specialty medications and the patients who take them in a personalized way, contact (866) 295-0451.



Experience Virtual Care, Automated

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Meet Quincy the
Healthcare Chatbot!



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