



Text: It's What's Next

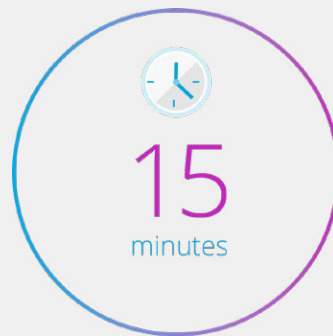
10 Stats That Explain Why Every Healthcare Provider
Should Be Texting with Patients



Communication in healthcare has never been more challenging. In 2017, we wrote a piece called “What’s Next with Text” where we looked at the growing trend of using text messaging in healthcare to communicate with a lot of patients who all have different needs and preferences. For years, we’ve been sounding the alarm that healthcare needed to get onboard with text messaging. Then, COVID-19 hit. And we can see how critical text messaging is in getting information out quickly and ensuring patients see it.



The response rate for text messages is [209 percent higher](#) than it is for phone calls.



Most text messages are [read within 15 minutes](#).

In this day and age, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that text messaging is an effective way to stay connected with your patients. [Most smartphone users](#) are already texting, so why not take advantage of that to keep the lines of communication open between you and your patients?



Texting is a win for everyone.

Not only are your patients already savvy texters, it is also a quick way for your practice to communicate. On average, it takes about [four seconds to send a text message](#) while a phone call lasts about two minutes.

Two minutes may not seem like a long time, but that's just the amount of time spent actually talking to the patient. This doesn't include time dialing the phone, waiting for an answer, leaving a message, and then calling back or waiting for a return call. Pretty quickly you are at more than two minutes per call. And consider this: Practices receive about [50 incoming phone calls](#) each day. At two minutes per call (or more), that's almost two hours that your staff spends every day just answering the phone. Add to that outbound calls if you don't automate reminders or recalls, and the hours quickly add up.



Four seconds to send a text message.



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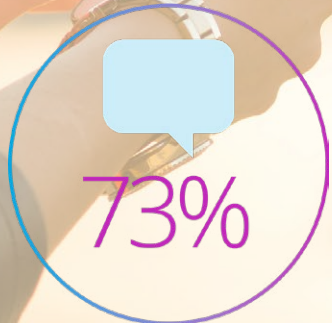
50 incoming phone calls each day.



Increase confirmations by over 150 percent.



Reduce no-show rates to five percent or less.



Seventy-three percent want to text their provider.



79 percent want to get text from their provider.

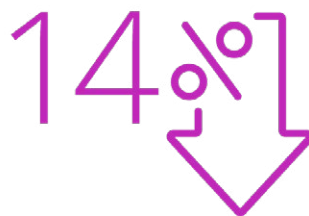
Text is more efficient.

Text messages on the other hand, take only seconds to type and send. And even if a text conversation takes a few texts back and forth, you are still only looking at 16 seconds. Texting can be used by the practice for outbound and inbound communications initiated by you and patients.

Now we also know that one crisis can quickly overwhelm your resources. You can't possibly call every patient you are going to see for a week or a month to cancel or move appointments to telehealth.

We learned that from the pandemic. Group texts are a perfect solution, allowing you to text many people at once and enabling them to respond with questions.

Just imagine the time saved and the increase in efficiency if patients knew how to text your practice to schedule or confirm an appointment, get directions to your office, or ask questions about pre-appointment instructions. Add to that the time saved on making calls for reminders and recalls. Automated reminders sent on the right cadence can also increase patient confirmations by over 150 percent and reduce no-show rates to five percent or less.



Plus, you retain the personal touch your practice prides itself on, because you are reaching patients in the way they want to be reached. Our Patient-Provider Relationship Study found that most patients want to use text to communicate with providers. Seventy-three percent want to text their provider and 79 percent want to get texts from their provider. And the desire for text and automated communications is only on the rise. A survey comparing patients' communication preferences both before and during COVID found that interest in phone calls had dropped by 14 percent in just a few months.



By redirecting phone calls to text messages, your staff will also have more time to devote to engaging with the patients in the office. Most physicians believe that the biggest barrier to patient engagement is the lack of time the practice staff has to offer its patients. With text messages, the receptionist doesn't have to interrupt the patient standing at their desk in order to answer the phone. They can finish the conversation with the patient, make sure they have everything they need, and then read and respond to the incoming texts. Those few extra minutes of uninterrupted time will make a world of difference to your patients.

So what's the bottom line? Texting conversations means greater efficiency for staff and a better experience for patients. What's more, text has proven to be a valuable tool for delivering mass messages quickly during a crisis—whether it's changing appointments to telehealth during a pandemic or letting patients know about a closure due to a hurricane. And it has become a great tool to support safety measures like park and text waiting. It's really become something you can't live without, like electronic billing or EHR templates.



So, what should you look for in a text messaging system?

You know you need to offer text to communicate with patients. But what should you look for in a solution to text with patients? Here's a list of five things to get you started:

1. The ability to use your phone number. You want your text messages to come from the number your patients already know, not a short code. Pick a texting solution that lets you use your office number for text messages.

2. Options for both real-time, two-way text and automated texts. You want to be able to send automated texts for things like reminders, recall, surveys, etc. that patients can read and respond to. You also want to offer real-time conversations that can be initiated by either the practice or the patient.

3. Maintain message history. Instant access to previous messages sent between a patient and your practice makes it easier for anyone in your practice to respond without asking patients to repeat information.

4. No apps or logins. Your patients don't need another app, and they shouldn't have to download one or register for a program to communicate with you. The point of texting is easy communication for everybody, so patients should be able to text you just like they text anyone else.

5. Use of text, images and emoji's. People don't just to text you back with words. They respond the same way to do to other text messages—with emoji's and images. So make sure your texting system can read those.

Texting is the norm in almost every aspect of our society, and it is quickly becoming the expectation in the healthcare industry as well. Patients [expect the same level of customer service](#) from their healthcare provider that they do from other businesses with whom they work. Offering text messaging is one of the key ways to offer that experience. It's easy to set up and use, and it creates a better communication experience for both staff and patients.



SR Health by Solutionreach provides health systems with AI-enabled solutions to engage with patients in ways that have measurable impacts on outcomes. By allowing providers to stay connected to patients throughout the care journey, healthcare organizations can optimize health and financial outcomes while creating a better patient experience. Solutionreach is the leader in patient engagement solutions and innovation. The first to send a text message in healthcare, the company now serves over 25,000 customers and facilitates one billion messages a year to 80 million patients in the U.S.

