Optum

Case study

Achieving an ideal patient experience

When the COVID-19 pandemic impacted its patient population, a large rural health system serving Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky sought to implement online scheduling to continue its standard for patient-provider health care interactions.



The initiative

The health system partnered with Optum to further its mission of putting patients first. The partnership provides online appointment scheduling services to health care providers for primary care, specialty care and urgent care facilities. Integration between Optum Patient Access and Engagement and a health organization's electronic patient management system enables patients to navigate to the appropriate provider and care setting with real-time appointment availability. To increase patient volume, Optum offers multichannel scheduling through entry points consumers use and trust, like health plan websites. Optum also promotes mobile-friendly scheduling and appointment reminders.

Optum proposed that the client implement online appointment scheduling to create an easy, simple and frictionless avenue for booking appointments. The collaboration was to help the health system's patient population quickly and conveniently access care. Over half (59%) of health care consumers say they feel frustrated when booking an appointment by phone due to inconvenient office hours or waiting on hold to speak with scheduling staff.*

59%

of consumers are frustrated when booking an appointment by phone. Self-guided digital scheduling may help fix this pain point.

*Hedges L. **Online booking options can get you more clients.** GetApp. April 7, 2021.



The solution

The client's initial phase of online scheduling through health insurance member websites launched in August 2020. The client expanded in September 2020 by implementing online appointment scheduling directly on its website. This differentiated approach of using multiple consumer care access points has become a successful strategy for Optum Patient Access and Engagement clients.

Provider scheduling

Optum provided an **online appointment scheduling solution for primary care and multiple specialties** – including urgent care centers – and also devised scheduling workflows to meet the requirements of the patient populations. Optum standardized the client's workflow questions, visit type mapping and patient experience across all specialties. They created custom alternate provider navigation rules to **direct patients to immediate care alternatives if their provider was unavailable**.

Proactive messaging

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Optum designed **proactive digital messaging for patients** exposed to the virus. In addition, the client **enabled online scheduling for COVID testing at its urgent care centers**. In August 2020, Optum launched scheduling for a **virtual urgent care center** to offer care access to patients not comfortable with in-person visits. To accommodate the immediacy of patient health care needs, the client incorporated a **same-day appointment scheduling** feature into the online scheduling solution. The health system further encouraged patient attendance at appointments using email and **text message reminders**.

Simple, digital care access

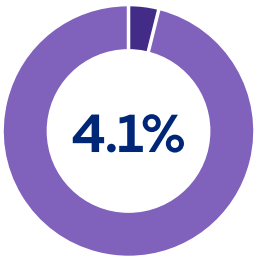
Optum helped continue the evolution of the **client's ideal patient-provider interaction** – friendly, established trust in times of vulnerability, a level of listening and understanding for patients, and most important, frictionless access to care.

The results

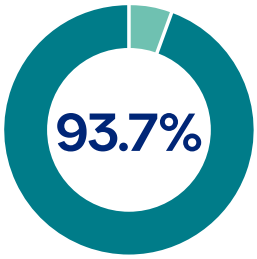
Despite launching during a global pandemic, the client maintained a low no-show appointment rate of 4.1% by leveraging Optum appointment reminders. Among patients who used digital scheduling, 93.7% were new to the system. More important, 74% of patients scheduled their visits on a mobile device. These bookings primarily occurred during prime morning to afternoon hours (8 a.m.–1 p.m.), a time frame where administrative staff receives high phone call volume from patients. In addition, the client exceeded its goal of reaching more patients under the age of 45 by approximately 60%.

A total 81.6% of appointments were booked for urgent care, with 53.9% of patients using same-day scheduling. Approximately half (48.4%) of the urgent care appointments booked were for COVID testing, illustrating the high demand for the service. The client's virtual urgent care clinic became one of the top 5 urgent care locations by number of appointments.

The client experienced 39, 940 bookings from August 2020 to August 2022.



No-show rate

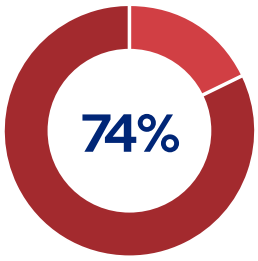


New user acquisition

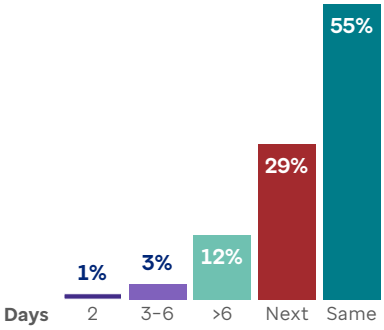
Conclusion

Optum Patient Access and Engagement helps health systems open a multitude of digital front doors, increasing patient acquisition rates and meeting the requirements of specific patient demographics. The simplicity, ease of use and 24/7 accessibility are a few benefits of online appointment scheduling.

Optum significantly expanded the client's reach to patients within surrounding rural communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Optum helped address patients' health care needs via online appointment scheduling for urgent care clinics. The convenience and 24/7 accessibility of online appointment scheduling introduced more patients to the health system's community. It also reduced the barrier for appointment booking completion.



Bookings scheduled on mobile device



Appointment scheduling

Learn more about improving access to care with Optum Patient Access and Engagement

Optum

optum.com

Optum is a registered trademark of Optum, Inc. in the U.S. and other jurisdictions. All other brand or product names are the property of their respective owners. Because we are continuously improving our products and services, Optum reserves the right to change specifications without prior notice. Optum is an equal opportunity employer.

© 2024 Optum, Inc. All rights reserved. WF12505274 1/24