

# HOW COVID-19 HAS CHANGED PAYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Jeffrey A. LaVaute, MPH  
Managing Director, Market Access  
Strategy, EVERSANA™ ENGAGE



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### The COVID-19 virus has fundamentally changed how we go about our daily lives on both a personal and professional level.

We are becoming more accustomed to social distancing and virtual interaction with our friends, family members, loved ones, and colleagues. The change in behavior seems to be an easier adjustment in our personal lives than professional lives, but both have been impacted as a result of the virus.

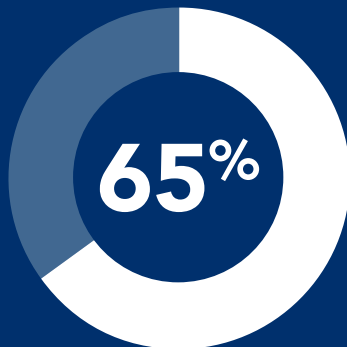
On a professional level, we continue to adjust the way in which we communicate, transmit information, and design experiences. The business of our business must go on, albeit with different rules of engagement.

The healthcare industry is rightly focused on COVID-19 and its impact on patient care and allocation or utilization of healthcare resources. However, we cannot lose sight of our responsibility to provide appropriate therapeutic options for the over 150 million Americans who suffer from chronic diseases<sup>1</sup>, including the 25-35 million Americans who suffer from rare diseases.<sup>2</sup> As professionals responsible for building content and educating

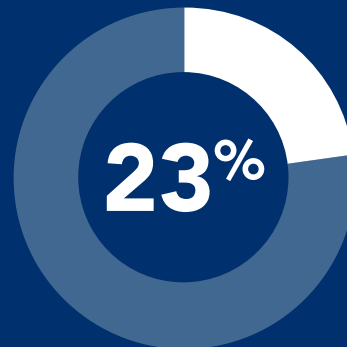
decision makers on various treatment options, we have an important role to play. As we continue to advocate for access to cost-effective care through improved quality and a focus on outcomes, our approach to engaging payers will shift.

In a recent survey conducted by EVERSANA, many respondents reported an increased workflow and new pressures to modify Utilization Management and Prior Authorization controls to reduce administrative burden on patients and HCP office staff.<sup>3</sup> Medication shortages are another concern for payers during this challenging time. Payers are reconsidering quantity limits, mail order policies, and shifting sites of care (i.e., from in-office or infusion suites to at home).<sup>3</sup>

The use of telehealth services is on the rise. Consider this: in a November 2019 survey by J.D. Power, it was found that only 9.6% of Americans have used telehealth services and nearly 75% of respondents reported that they do not have access or are unaware of telehealth options.<sup>4</sup> Today, telehealth is becoming a normal part of our healthcare experience and payers are taking notice, as evidenced by a recent [ACCESSEXPRESS®](#) by EVERSANA survey conducted from March 31 – April 1, 2020:<sup>5</sup>



65% of payers have seen an increase (>25%) in patients' use of telehealth services since the pandemic began



23% of payers expect today's use of telemedicine to stay the same even after the pandemic gets under control

# So what does this all mean for how pharmaceutical companies can engage payers?



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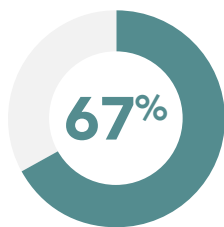
## 1 Embrace our North Star

Remember that we are in healthcare to serve patients, so maintain our focus on the patient journey. *This is our "Why."*

Invest in a deep understanding of the patient experience to understand what motivates their beliefs and behaviors. Spend the time to understand the unique influences that drive behavior such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, and comorbid conditions. The journey continues beyond initial diagnosis as patients cycle through a myriad of emotional and psychological stages of acceptance.<sup>6</sup> Our best approach is to put the patient at the center of healthcare decisions and build from there.

## 2 Go Digital

Adapt to the new realities of social distancing and an evolved information-seeking behavior by payers.



According to the EVERSANA research, **67%** of payers say that COVID-19 has changed their desired interactions with pharmaceutical companies. Respondents indicated that they are now more open to receiving information from pharmaceutical companies,

especially related to clinical and real-world evidence data, supply chain, and pipeline information. By investing in platforms and content, we can begin building the digital ecosystems now that will sustain our payer engagements into the future.

*"Treatment protocols, health outcomes, value-added support for medication compliance, best practices and improving quality ratings and influencing patient or physician behavior, these are important..."*  
—Medical Director, National Plan, Commercial Insurance

## 3 Build Industry Partnerships That Last



EVERSANA's research shows that over **50%** of respondents are open to pharmaceutical companies filling the information void as a business to business partner. However, industry conferences, publications, and sponsored events remain the

go-to as a trusted resource for payers. In addition to product-specific information, payers are searching for health policy news, future healthcare innovations, and population health. Pharmaceutical companies can create stronger virtual connections with payers by understanding their preferences for online content consumption.

“Digital interactions with colleagues/ customers and technology usage is paramount in times like these.”

— Chief Commercial Officer, National Managed Care Organization

## Conclusion

**COVID-19 has had an undeniable impact on how we all conduct our business, and this is especially true for healthcare stakeholders who face new pressures in this moment of crisis.**

As professionals who are focused on ensuring that the right patient has access to the right medication at the right time, it is imperative that we continue to push forward with our product/therapeutic area educational initiatives and patient support programs. But we must adapt to the new world of communication by creating content that resonates with payers' needs, that is designed in formats that are easily consumable, and delivered in channels supported by trusted sources. By changing the way in which we engage payers, we can adapt to the new environment while continuing to serve the patients whom we are dedicated to.

*This article was originally published in Med Ad News, April 2020*



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For the past 18 years, including over 10 years focused on payer decision making, Jeff has helped clients execute impactful, award-winning campaigns built on an understanding of the audience's journey and healthcare experience.

He is a firm believer in the IHI Triple Aim, which drives him to find innovative solutions that break down complex science, care patterns, and reimbursement issues so that customers can make informed decisions that will benefit patients, populations, and the quality of care.

His expert understanding of how to promote brands across channels (commercial, Medicare, and Medicaid), sites of care (hospitals, long-term care facilities, and outpatient facilities), and audience (payer, HCP, patient, and advocacy) has allowed Jeff to contribute valuable insights and leadership to clients.

His therapeutic areas of focus include multiple sclerosis, spinal muscular atrophy, Alzheimer's disease, anti-obesity, and several ultra-orphan diseases. Jeff holds an MPH from Columbia University.



### About EVERSANA™

EVERSANA is the leading independent provider of global services to the life science industry. The company's integrated solutions are rooted in the patient experience and span all stages of the product lifecycle to deliver long-term, sustainable value for patients, prescribers, channel partners and payers. The company serves more than 500 organizations, including innovative start-ups and established pharmaceutical companies to advance life science solutions for a healthier world. To learn more about EVERSANA, visit [EVERSANA.COM](http://EVERSANA.COM) or connect through [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

