

How Manufacturers Can Optimize and Organize Support Services for Specialty Drugs Through a Patient Touchpoint Analysis

Mike Scott, *Partner*

Lee Ann Steadman, *Partner*



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ABSTRACT

Currently representing 48% of the overall pharmacy benefit spend, specialty drugs are classified as being high-complexity, high-touch and high-cost medications.^{1,2} As healthcare providers (HCPs) and patients turn to these more expensive products to treat rare, complex and/or chronic medical conditions, the need for increased patient education, adherence and support services has been elevated.¹ To best understand the patient experience and their needs, healthcare systems are turning to patient journey mapping.³ Using this tool, healthcare entities such as the provider's practice, the insurer, the specialty pharmacy and manufacturers are developing and providing their versions of patient support services. Due to the lack of coordination between these entities, patients are inundated with calls, emails and texts from different entities, particularly during their first 60 days, creating confusion, the desire to opt-out of services and adding layers of complexity to their overall journey. To address these challenges, we have created a solution to streamline and optimize the patient experience. By conducting a patient touchpoint analysis, manufacturers can ensure that patients and healthcare entities have a single point-of-contact to help direct patients, ensure services and touchpoints are better timed, remove redundancies of new or existing programs and ensure everyone is providing the optimal benefit to patients and caregivers.

Background



Spend and prescriptions for specialty drugs have risen considerably and steadily over the past ten years and are forecasted to continue to do so.^{1,2} Currently representing 48% of the overall pharmacy benefit spend, specialty drugs, often infused or injected, are classified as being high complexity, high-touch and particularly high-cost medications.^{1,2}

In 2019, Medicare defined specialty-tier drugs as those that cost more than \$670 a month. This elevated cost is due primarily to their complicated manufacturing process and/or need for special handling, administration or monitoring.¹ As HCPs and patients turn to these more expensive products to treat rare, complex and/or chronic medical conditions, the need for increased patient education, adherence and support services has also been elevated.¹

To best understand the patient experience and their overarching and specific needs, healthcare systems are turning to patient journey mapping.³ Understanding the patient's experience from symptoms to diagnosis and treatment and how they interact with their care or hospital system helps pinpoint when to provide support and the type of services that should be provided. These

insights are especially helpful when the patient journey is mapped from onset of symptoms to diagnosis, to post-care and beyond.³

As previously mentioned, offering patient and support services beyond the traditional dispensing activities is necessary due to the complex profile of specialty drugs that require intensive patient management, adherence and compliance.^{4,5} In an attempt to assist patients with each of these areas, it is increasingly common for healthcare entities to each provide their version of patient support. For this white paper, we define healthcare entities as the patient's provider offices, their care specialists, their insurance providers, and the specialty pharmacy that dispenses the product. We would also like to note that while manufacturers of specialty drugs are not HCPs, they also provide patient services and are included in this group.

Specific examples of healthcare entities providing services are the patient support programs (PSPs) offered by manufacturers that provide core and enhanced services tailored to the patient's needs and suited to the product attributes. Specialty pharmacies (SPs) design services that provide support beyond what retail pharmacies offer.⁵ Insurance providers will offer services as part of their healthcare plans. And



integrated delivery networks (IDN) and HCPs often provide complex support services to help elevate levels of patient care.⁶ It is clear healthcare entities believe it is in their best interest to participate in patient support.

Problem Statement



There are several challenges to the current approaches used when determining and identifying the moments patients need support. While patient journey mapping is a helpful tool that provides insight into the stages of treatment and the experience of a patient, it does not always reflect an accurate or complete picture of care.

Identifying a patient journey that is truly representative of the patient experience can be difficult for various reasons.⁷ One reason is the inherent complexity of both business and clinical processes and protocols across the various healthcare entities involved in the treatment of chronic and rare diseases. Another reason is the dynamics and ad-hoc nature of treatment, as each patient comes into their diagnosis differently and may be treated using different methodologies and therapeutics. A third reason involves the number of disciplines involved in treating chronic, rare and complex disease states. Patients typically have a care team that spans across multiple disciplines, each with its own focus, approach and priorities. A final reason it is difficult to map the entire journey and critical touchpoints is that post-care doesn't typically receive the same level of attention as diagnosis and initial treatment.⁸ Just one or a combination of the above can make it difficult to identify or monitor a typical patient journey that covers all phases of treatment of a chronic or rare condition with a specialty drug.

Another issue with the approaches previously outlined involves the number of healthcare entities offering patient services to patients new to therapy. Once a specialty drug is prescribed, it is not unusual for the patient to be contacted by their HCP, their SP, the manufacturer's PSP and their insurance provider multiple times within the first 30-60 days.

While all are looking to help the patient start and stay on treatment as quickly and efficiently as possible, this cascade of information with different paperwork and processes can be overwhelming, overlapping and perhaps even conflicting.⁸

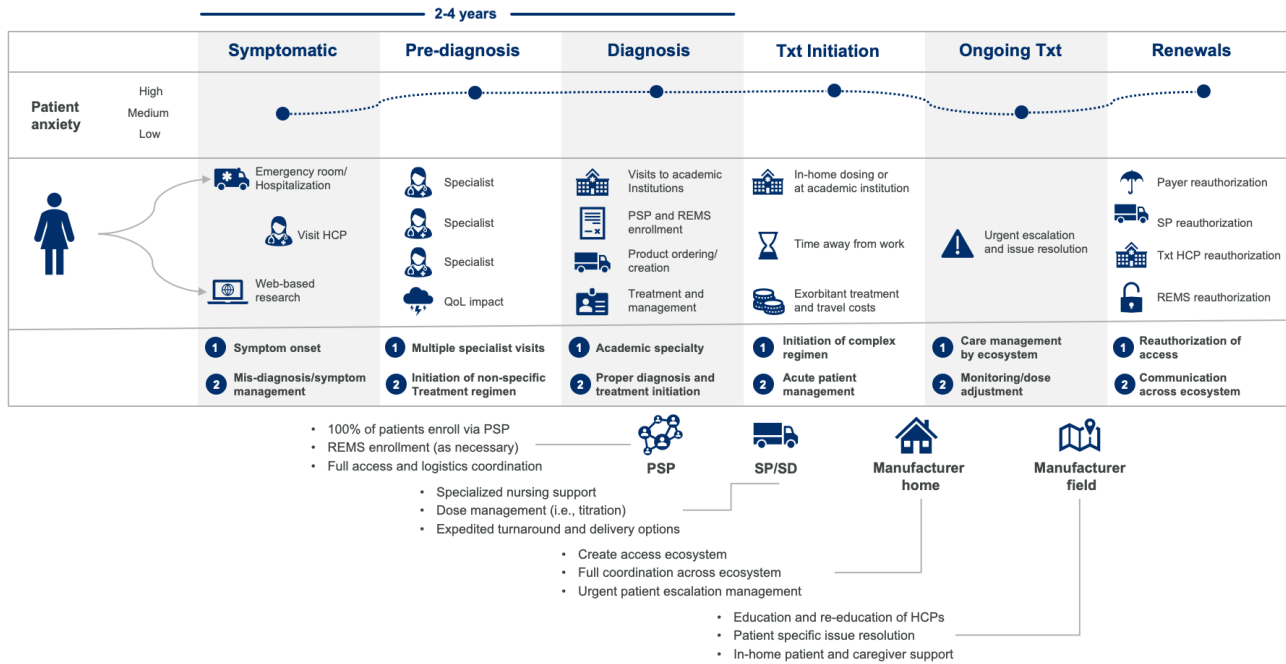
Although healthcare entities are united in helping patients gain access to their medications, unfortunately, there is often little to no coordination between them regarding the cadence or timing of touchpoints or the delivery of new patient information.⁸ Due to a lack of coordination and oversight, no one healthcare entity is looking at the stream of information to the patient holistically. Which can lead to redundancies, replication and perhaps even contradictions in messaging.

It is also challenging when each healthcare entity determines the cadence and service offering that best suits their own business and patient goals. This results in no one healthcare entity ensuring a comprehensive and consistent quality of care. One example of this is the services offered by SPs. When an SP contracts to supply a specialty drug, their core services are often automatic and non-negotiable, regardless of if they are redundant to the manufacturers or the insurers. Another example? As a part of the latest healthcare reform, pharmacists are being financially incentivized to ensure they are helping Medicare beneficiaries adhere to prescription treatment.¹⁰ It is in their best interest to offer patient support that encourages adherence even if that service is already being offered by another healthcare entity.

The last challenge to patients on specialty drugs is the fact that they are often already at risk for lack of adherence and compliance with these complex medications. Up to 50% of patients with chronic conditions in the US do not adhere to their prescription medications.⁹ When on multiple medications, it is not unusual for patients to get confused with their treatment regimens.¹⁰ It has been found that multiple sources of information may contribute to prescription abandonment.⁸ Also, conflicting information may cause treatment discontinuation and too much information has been found to lead to increased anxiety for the patient.^{8,11}



An Example of a Patient Journey



We believe that by conducting a patient touchpoint analysis in conjunction with patient journey mapping, manufacturers can address and alleviate many of the current challenges. There are several steps a manufacturer should undertake when performing a touchpoint analysis. The first step should involve a thorough review of your proposed marketing brand plan to ensure that no service is developed in a silo without understanding its impact on the trade, payer and patient services teams.

Another important step in conducting a touchpoint analysis is mapping out all touchpoints for the patient and their caregivers throughout the entire patient journey. It is important to include all critical communication and support moments for the patient and their caregivers, including at diagnosis, during the pre-care period, during the treatment period and especially during post-care when the patient is between treatments because the symptoms are controlled or in remission. This map will allow you to see where integration of touchpoints can occur, which touchpoints may traditionally be neglected and where there may be holes in the patient communication stream. The goal in this step is to enhance not hinder patient access and adaptation of specialty medication.

Using the information derived from the two steps listed above, manufacturers can then build a flexible and customizable patient-centric brand strategy that

ensures success with patient adherence, compliance and satisfaction. We suggest that several key actions need to take place before building an optimal brand strategy.

ACTION 1: REVIEW ALL EXISTING CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS AND SERVICES

An extremely necessary but often overlooked action is reviewing every contract with each healthcare entity partner. All contractual obligations and planned service offerings should be reviewed and cataloged in a master database. Be sure to include the timing of services as well as the frequency of touchpoints and planned interactions. This allows for ease of comparison across healthcare entities.

ACTION 2: IDENTIFY, ESTIMATE AND AGGREGATE VOLUME OF TOUCHPOINTS

This is the moment to identify those critical patient and caregiver moments that contribute to patient comprehension, adherence and compliance. Be sure to pinpoint redundancies or unwanted lapses in communication for all contracted touchpoints. This is also the time to map out touchpoints past that initial 60 day period to ensure patients are continuing to receive the support they need.

ACTION 3: USE DATA AND INFORMATION TO CREATE SLAs AND ALIGN EFFORTS

By taking on a leadership role through the coordination of contractual obligations and services being offered by each healthcare entity, manufacturers can use this insight to create highly effective SLAs. By aligning everyone's efforts, which only benefits each healthcare entity and the patients in the long run, manufacturers can gain trust and be seen as the coordinating healthcare entity. Just be sure to continue to manage touchpoints at all stages of the patient journey once they have been aligned.

Conclusion



Traditionally, manufacturers have not positioned themselves as the primary point of contact during the onboarding of new patients to a specialty drug. However, being able to help patients start and stay on what is known to be a complicated and expensive product will benefit not only the manufacturer but all healthcare entities who are involved in bringing the product to the patient. Performing a patient touchpoint analysis will provide multiple benefits that often have long-lasting effects throughout the patient journey. Primarily, it will:

- ✔ Confirm new or existing programs are most beneficial to patients and caregivers
- ✔ Create a better-timed outreach of healthcare entities across the spectrum of care
- ✔ Provide a single point-of-contact for patients, caregivers and healthcare entities

Performing a patient touchpoint analysis and journey mapping helps to ensure a more consistent quality of care throughout the patient's journey. In today's world where adherence and compliance are paramount to ensuring patients are optimally treated for their rare and complex conditions, we strongly believe this approach will help to provide the support, tools and guidance patients and caregivers need throughout the treatment journey.

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