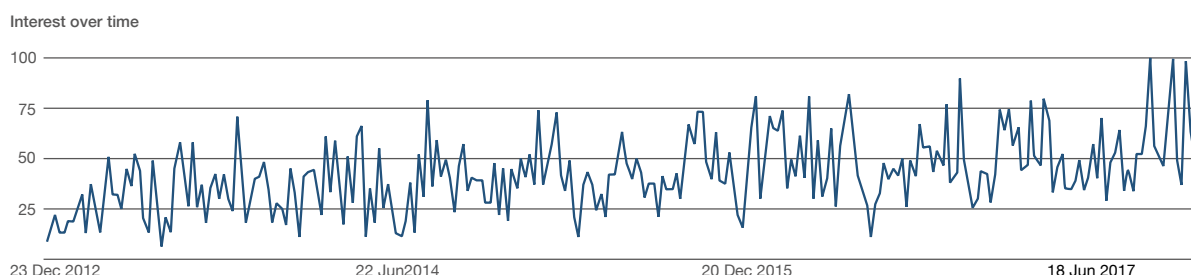


Patient Engagement

Practical steps to move beyond the talk

Type the term “patient engagement” into Google Trends and it becomes clear that it has grown steadily in popularity over the last five years.



This will come as no surprise for most of us working within the pharmaceutical industry. However, when you speak to many of the early adopters of patient engagement, it's clear that a fatigue has set in with how much talk there is compared to the number of actual examples of meaningful patient engagement occurring.

In response to this, some companies have now stopped talking about how “patient-centric” they are and instead are focusing on quietly building up real world experience.

This need for greater progress is something that was also reflected in the results of the PM Society's latest survey of its members, which found that although progress is being made, there is still a way to go in how we engage with patients as an industry.

Progress is being made but there is still a way to go, with current patient engagement levels rated across the following areas*:

Research & development	3.51
Clinical trial design	3.54
Market access	4.07
Commercial communications	4.85
Patient support programmes	6.26

*scored out of 10

In January 2018, the PM Society is hosting an event: [Patient engagement – a real world snapshot, beyond the talk](#), which will focus on some of the real-world examples of patient engagement in action. The aim of this event is to offer attendees practical ways to engage with patients and overcome some of the barriers related to compliance and legal, securing internal buy in and providing return on investment.

In advance of that, we have compiled ten practical steps that have emerged from the industry's experiences, which can help your company engage with patients in the real world.

10 Practical Steps

1

Understand the differing patient profiles within your disease area and engage with different profiles in a tailored way

Market research can help to segment the patient population, so you understand the different patient characteristics. Many patient profiles cover people with high and low engagement or activation levels, it is important to ensure you can reach as many of them as possible.

2

Build flexibility for change into your project plan

There is bound to be some movement from the path when dealing with patients directly, to ensure that their needs are met. It is important that the people involved know that they have been listened to, this may change your initial objectives to suit these changes.

3

Work with patients to set measurable outcomes that matter to them

Outcomes that matter to patients should be agreed at the beginning of every project, and measured during and on completion of the project. This allows us to assess what programmes are successful and monitor the impact our activities have on wider patient populations. The outcomes will vary from project to project, such as increasing shared-decision making between a healthcare professional and a patient, practical changes in the design of a clinical trial or an increase in patient adherence to treatment.

4

Be transparent about expectations and boundaries of the work from the beginning

There are core values to patient engagement programmes and initiatives, including being transparent about the boundaries of the work, clear about the level of decision-making power the patients will have, and providing the right level of information so everyone has a foundational understanding and feels able to contribute to discussions.

5

Use engaging facilitation techniques to surface deeper insights

As people we sometimes say we're fine when in reality there's a lot more going on beneath the surface. It is important to surface the actual reality of how people think, feel and do in relation to their health and care. One way to do this is through [projective facilitation techniques](#), which help to surface a person's true perspectives. This might require a process mapping activity or taking on a role play exercise to explore their thoughts and feelings on a certain topic.



Everyday language must be used so everyone understands the subject matter

It is important that relevant complex scientific or health and care terms are explained carefully for everyone to understand. For example, materials can be Plain English certified, and approved by the Information Standard.



Put strategies in place to maintain high levels of engagement over time

Patient engagement projects will often run over the course of months or even years. To maintain engagement, it is important to provide opportunities for patients to feedback on co-created materials regularly, and provide evidence that feedback is being implemented.

In recognition of being experts on their condition and care experience, and the time they give to a project, patients should have the choice to be reimbursed in the form of a fair market value honorarium. Not all patients will want to be paid for their involvement, but this choice should be theirs.



Communicate regularly internally and champion success

It is important that internal stakeholders are informed of the benefits and successes of patient involvement activities. Whether this is by sharing snippets of patient insights, or demonstrating improved outcomes for people, it can help to build support and engagement from colleagues for these programmes. Those engaging with patients in a meaningful way should be rewarded internally for their efforts.



Consider how your insights can inform and enhance other projects across the business

The insight learned from engaging with patients can take you to surprising places with unexpected conclusions. This insight can be highly valuable for other aspects of your business and will help you bring added value to not only your work but that of others too.



Share best practice externally

Sharing best practice of successful patient engagement initiatives externally will ensure that we are learning from each other as an industry. By identifying the factors that work well, and suggesting improvements, a bigger and stronger patient focused community can be built. For example, tools such as [SYNaPsE](#), are being developed to connect patient initiatives and experts across the globe.

Patient engagement – a real world snapshot, beyond the talk
will take place on Thursday 25th January. [Register here.](#)