



PATIENT-PROVIDER DIALOGUE POV

It takes a specialized approach to influence the patient-provider conversation.

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Patient-provider communication is vital to your brand's success. Traditional approaches focus on the disease rather than the patient. So how can you support optimal conversations about treatment?

That's where we come in.

Building on our behavioral science expertise, we combed through published research and conducted some of our own. We found ways to improve the treatment discussion between patients and providers using evidence-based tactics that are backed up by decades of research.¹

Now, it's up to you to uncover the opportunities.

Why does patient-provider communication matter?

The most important conversation a patient has is with his or her provider.² And when there are gaps in the treatment discussion, your brand may be missing an opportunity.

What's the traditional pharma marketing approach?

We've all seen standard doctor discussion guides and basic talk tracks. A few brands have even developed videos demonstrating the kind of conversations they'd like to see happen. These traditional message-based tactics are a step in the right direction, but they can only do so much.

Traditional message-based approaches look at the patient-provider dialogue from the outside in, **examining ways to interrupt the conversation and insert your brand.**

Consider the impact if you were to look at the dialogue from the inside out, **supporting the conversation and influencing the process of care.**

It's tempting to conclude that taking the patient-provider dialogue further isn't possible—but it is.

How can patient-provider communication be changed?

With evidence based-approaches and a specialist as your partner, you can improve the way patients and providers interact by helping them build skills. Communication, like most behaviors, can be taught and influenced.³

Instead of interrupting the current discussion, try influencing the process of care by supporting patients and providers throughout the conversation. View the patient and provider as a single, decision-making team, and develop solutions designed for a 2-way exchange of information.

With specialized expertise, experience, and know-how, you can do it.

Is your brand:

Making it into the conversation?

How do you know if your brand is a part of the patient-provider conversation? Research shows that patients and providers often struggle to have an honest and productive dialogue.⁴

Revealing its benefits?

Many providers focus on risks—instead of product benefits—in their communication with patients.⁵

Setting patients up to be successful?

Do patients know what they can expect from your product? How can they be prepared for the treatment experience?



To improve the conversation, all 3 of these factors must be addressed.


BELIEFS. Patients may not always tell the truth, because being honest might reveal that their disease is getting worse or that their current treatment is failing. When providers use close-ended questions, they may not address illness perceptions that are critical for treatment decisions and outcomes.⁶

MOTIVATIONS. Many patients are overwhelmed and scared. As a coping mechanism, some normalize their symptoms or deny there’s a problem instead of talking to their provider about important issues.⁷ In response, providers often make assumptions about what patients want and are willing to do.⁶

SKILLS. Patients can be educated about their disease but lack the skills to engage in an effective discussion with their provider.⁸ Providers have clinical know-how, but they do not often receive training about which communication techniques can best support the patient and lead to optimal outcomes.³

What does the research show?

To better understand the full impact of patient-provider communication on day-to-day disease management and outcomes, we conducted an in-depth, journal-based survey.¹

16 Patients ¹			
4 Disease States ¹		4 Topics ¹	
Type 2 diabetes		How they communicate with their provider about their disease	
Multiple sclerosis		The impact of provider communication on their ability to manage their disease	
COPD		The quality of their relationship with their provider	
Leukemia/Lymphoma		Their reactions to real-world patient-provider conversations	

Again and again, we found that common communication challenges could be addressed by using evidence-based behavioral approaches.¹

- Shared Decision Making
- Motivational Interviewing
- Reflective Listening
- Health Coaching
- Observational Learning
- Cognitive Behavioral Techniques

FINDING #1 Each patient wants to be treated as a person, not a diagnosis.

Even compassionate providers may lack skills in patient-centered communication.³

“My doctor always asks about my family and my job, and we talk about things not related to my disease. I like that because it makes me feel like I am not just another patient.”¹

— Alese, 58, chronic lymphocytic leukemia



Do providers know how to uncover patients' concerns, needs, and goals in a conversation about your product? When providers apply shared decision-making techniques, patients and providers work together to determine what matters most to patients about their disease and treatment. This results in the development of a treatment plan that fits each patient's lifestyle and values. It also increases the likelihood that the patient will adhere to the plan.⁹

FINDING #2 A provider's ability to listen is a priority for patients.

Listening is a skill, and it's an important one.

“My doctor is easy to talk to, and he actually listens. He never makes me feel like I am not heard.”¹

— Roberta, 36, COPD



Many of the patients we spoke to reported that their providers should listen more carefully. Training in motivational interviewing and other patient-centered communication strategies can help providers improve this skill.⁶ Patients reported higher levels of satisfaction when their providers listened to them without interrupting for as little as 30 seconds. Further, the research suggests that communication can be improved without increasing the length of an office visit.⁴

When you address the beliefs, motivations, and skills that interfere with optimal patient-provider communication, you can get the most out of your brand message.”

— Meredith Terry, Senior Behaviorist, MicroMass Communications, Inc.

Learn how our specialized approach can lead to better outcomes for your patients and your brand.

FINDING #3 Patients don't want to be told what to do.

Your doctor should offer you choices and let you make decisions about managing your diabetes, because it makes you feel like you're in control and not just doing what the doctor thinks you should do.¹

— Donald, 52, type 2 diabetes



Traditionally, providers view themselves as the primary decision maker and believe they know what's best for their patients.

Do providers always know best? Providers are experts on health conditions and treatment options, but patients are experts on their own goals for treatment and what they're willing to do to meet those goals. The provider and patient need to work together to find a treatment plan that fits the patient's condition, abilities, and lifestyle.⁹

FINDING #4 There's a better way to deliver bad news.

My doctor just told me about all the negative things—like losing my eyesight, amputation, and numbness in my feet and hands. I was shocked. I didn't respond right away. I cried for a least an hour. I wish my doctor wouldn't have been so blunt.¹

— Latiesha, 33, type 2 diabetes



Research suggests that patients prefer to hear bad news before good news. Although this presentation style can be good for the patient's mood, it is unlikely to result in behavior change.¹⁰

When providers want patients to take action—to stop smoking, to get more exercise, to take their medications as prescribed—they are more likely to have an impact by delivering the good news first.¹⁰

Introducing bad news after good news encourages a discussion about solutions and specific behavior change.¹⁰

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How does a specialized approach stack up against traditional brand tactics?

As a brand marketer, you are in a unique position. You have access to both the patient and the provider. This gives you an opportunity to equip both parties with the skills to make their conversations easier and more effective.

Messaging strategies won't change the dialogue. Pharma must create communication solutions using evidence-based methods that have demonstrated a positive impact on the quality of patient-provider discussions.

The right approaches facilitate a 2-way dialogue and ensure that treatment decisions align with patient goals, are tailored to the patient's real-world needs, and lead to optimal patient outcomes.⁹

Traditional Marketing Approach	Specialized Approach
A one-size-fits-all doctor discussion guide	An interactive tool, featuring observational learning scenarios, that helps the patient develop the skills to communicate with the provider
Dinner meetings lead by KOLs including key brand data and messages	An expert-led program that includes self-assessment of communication skills and active skill building activities in patient-centered communication
A call center that provides product information and access support	Call center staff trained in evidence-based communication strategies, such as health coaching , that proactively address patient barriers to an optimal therapy experience
A tracking and reminder program designed to improve patient adherence	A nurse tool kit based on cognitive behavioral techniques and motivational interviewing that helps nurses engage in conversation with patients to build their motivation to attend appointments and to take their medication as prescribed
A patient brochure with tips for coping with treatment and emotions	An interactive goal-setting tool that helps patients and providers identify areas of distress and then facilitates patient skill building to cope with emotional difficulties related to their disease and treatment

Patient-provider communication is a critical part of your brand's success.

Shouldn't you be giving it the attention it deserves?

Learn more about our specialized approach.

Contact Jude Kelly today at jude.kelly@micromass.com or 919.256.2401.

