

The Backbone of Healthcare's Digital Transformation

Three pillars of patient identity management



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The acceleration of digital transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced providers to reimagine how healthcare is delivered beyond the four walls of a physical care setting. As they closed their doors to nonemergency and elective care, a massive shift in innovation, acceleration and adoption of patient engagement technology occurred, serving as a much-needed catalyst for digital transformation.

Overnight, the patient portal — a long-established entity — became a tool clinicians and patients alike needed. In 2019, the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT [reported](#) that over half **(62%) of hospitals said less than one-quarter of their patient populations activated access to their patient portal.** Patients knew it existed, but now it became a necessity.

Simultaneously, telehealth grew to become a crucial lifeline for patients who needed a doctor's visit. [The CDC reported a 154% increase in telehealth visits during the last week of March 2020, compared to the same time period in 2019.](#)

The renewed focus on a digital front door strategy allows patients the flexibility, personalization and convenience they've never encountered before. It's the start of an entirely new healthcare experience where quality patient information is fundamental to delivering and exceeding patient expectations.

Virtual care models are here to stay thanks to online visits, remote monitoring and patient engagement tools that effectively reduced foot traffic when in-person care wasn't an option. Via a videoconference, or even text, patients were getting the care they needed, when and where they needed it.

With access to accurate patient information and preferences at every step of the journey — from the time they schedule an appointment to when they are treated and billed — digital transformation truly enables a better care experience. It's the ability to know who a patient is before they show up — to gain insights that help inform how to effectively engage and resonate. It's the ability to tailor messaging to a patient before, during and after the point of care through their preferred communication channels.



The new age of patient information

Patient identity is the backbone of everything in healthcare, providing the fuel for healthcare consumerization and the keys to the digital front door. As organizations focus on improving the patient experience, enabling patient access, and measuring and reporting performance, a patient identity strategy is core to enabling these enterprisewide initiatives.

Providers face tremendous internal and external pressures, including the imperative to deliver safer, higher quality of care, as well as the ongoing shift from volume-based to value-based care.

These transformative changes require patient-centered care driven by a comprehensive view of the patient.

As patients seek care across multiple settings, both in person and virtual, care coordination challenges increase without a single view of the same patient. Enter patient identification — paramount to ensuring patients receive safe, accurate and personalized care. According to one estimate, matching within facilities can be as low as 80 percent — meaning that 1 out of every 5 patients may not be matched to all his or her records when seeking care at a location they've already received care from in the past.

The vision of an integrated, interoperable healthcare ecosystem starts with consistently and correctly linking disparate clinical and non-clinical data across silos to generate the single best, most accurate patient record.



1 out of every 5 patients

May not be matched to all his or her records when seeking care at a location they've already received care from in the past.



The three pillars of patient identity management

Healthcare's digital transformation begins and ends with accurate and holistic patient identities. Organizations that truly know their patients know that the Maria currently seeking diabetes treatment in Austin is the same Maria who was treated for asthma in Houston last year. They would also know that Thomas Smith goes by Tom, making it less likely that another patient named Thomas Smith receives a prescription that belongs to Tom.

In AHIMA's 2020 patient identification survey, 22% of respondents reported they achieved a 1% or less duplicate error rate in their electronic health record (EHR).

How does an organization successfully get there? It starts with resolution, enrichment and protection — the three pillars of identity management that are foundational to achieve the most accurate, comprehensive and secure view of today's healthcare consumer.



1 Resolution: Confidently identify and match patient records and ensure accurate patient demographic data.



2 Enrichment: Update and enhance patient information for the most current, accurate, holistic patient view.



3 Protection: Authenticate a patient identity before sharing sensitive information.



1



Resolution

Confidently identify and match patient records and ensure accurate patient demographic data

Regardless of where a patient receives care, patient data quickly cascades through a maze of connected and potentially disparate electronic systems. The conversion from paper charts to electronic health records has left patient data in more silos than ever before. Identities are often inconsistent across systems — ordinarily incomplete, out of date and unreliable.

Matching errors can separate a current visit from prior visit documentation. Critical record elements — such as diagnoses, testing, allergies, medications, contact information, social history and family history — may not be linked to the patient's unique health record, hindering a provider's ability to assess a patient. This may result in improper care, additional testing or potentially threaten patient safety for charity care.

Through patient portals and personal health record apps, patients gain visibility into their missing health records. According to Black Book Research, **88% of consumers directly blame the hospital system for their dissatisfaction with the lack of portability of their health care records.**

Identifiers like name, address, birthdate, gender, phone and email are error-prone and can change over time. In 2019 alone, nearly 36 million address changes were processed and according to one of the largest data analyses in recent years, 70% of married women changed their names.

According to the Sequoia Project, around 30% of patient demographic data in electronic health records is mistyped, misspelled, incomplete or incorrect, and even if it's accurate to begin with, **12% of demographic data becomes outdated within a year.**

Your Resolution Checklist

Know the basics

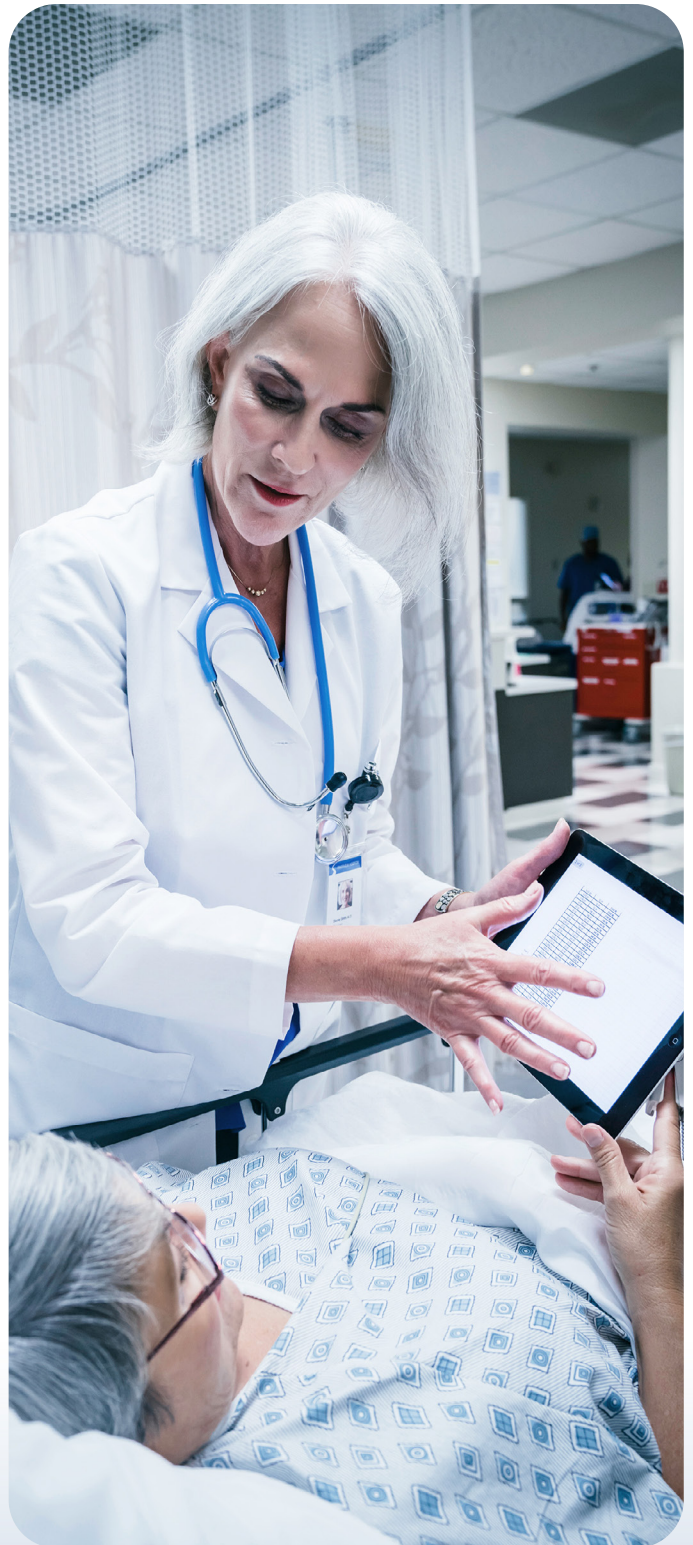
- Ensure the organization has the most up-to-date demographics and patient contact information.
- Validate and correct demographic data during preregistration and check-in by opening dialogue with patients.
 - *Are you that patient?*
 - *Is the information that I have about you accurate? If so, are all of the subsequent care pieces tied to you?*
 - *Do I know where you currently live? Do we have your best information in case of an emergency?*
 - *Do I know your communication preferences so I can follow up with you according to those preferences?*

Take a multifaceted approach to patient matching

- Combine information in patient rosters with comprehensive reference and demographic data held by data companies to create a holistic picture of each patient.
- Find a vendor that draws on data from the most reliable data sets, as referential matching can only be as good as the reference data it relies on.
- Choose a vendor that understands the importance of leveraging the highest quality original source data and doesn't rely on a matching algorithm that's dependent on Social Security numbers (SSN), which often aren't readily available within healthcare enterprise data sets.
- Understand the current match rate and look to achieve match rates of 98% or higher.

Know thy patient and correctly link data

- Assign a universal patient identifier (UPI) to each patient stored in a master identity index, so whenever and wherever they appear, referential matching technology knows exactly which data is theirs.
- Connect disparate data sets with confidence that every new data point will be instantly checked and updated.



2



Enrichment

Update and enhance patient information for the most current, accurate, holistic patient view

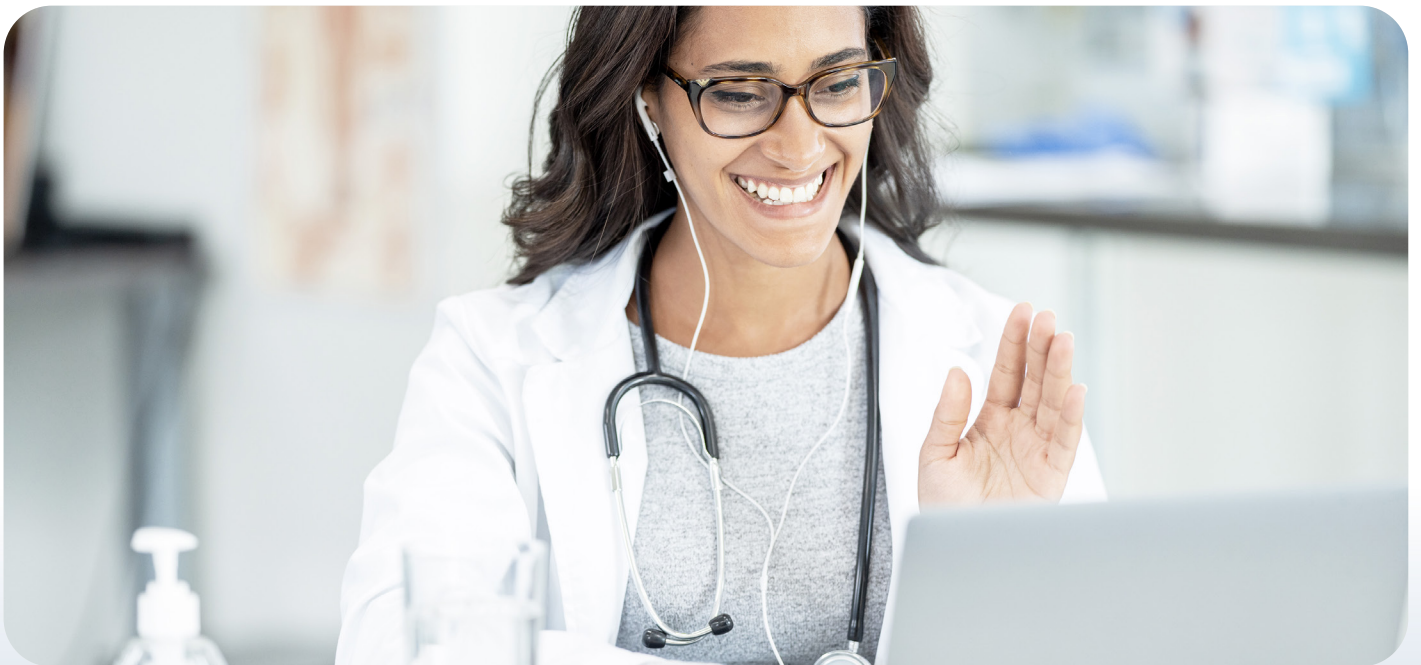
To deliver optimal care and a positive patient experience, payers and providers alike need a comprehensive and complete view of each patient's health history across the entire continuum of care. **Having and maintaining a single, accurate view of the patient — the "golden record" — is critical to close gaps in care at the individual level, address patient safety concerns and optimize patient outreach efforts.**

The challenge has long been how to connect all of a patient's information, both clinical and nonclinical, that impact their care journey.

With information stored in disparate IT systems collected via multiple avenues, accurate patient identification is vital to piece the information together and achieve a deeper understanding of the patient. Additionally, a comprehensive and continuously updated reference database is needed to ensure the information stays current.

As the industry moves toward value-based care and risk-based delivery and payment models, this enhanced view of the patient gives providers the insight they need to address the nonclinical barriers to care, or social determinants of health (SDOH). Access to care, technology or financial hardships hinder a patient's ability to follow treatment plans, take medication or attend important follow-up visits. As a result, this increases chances of patients being readmitted or unnecessary emergency visits that could be avoided with appropriate care planning informed from a single, best patient record. Providers risk poor quality ratings and fewer reimbursements, while payers risk increased wasteful costs.

Organizations must prioritize achieving the golden record to ultimately improve health outcomes.



Your Enrichment Checklist

Understand nonclinical data elements

- Who is your healthcare consumer/patient?
- What do they do?
- How and when can they be reached?
- What motivates them?
- Leverage consumer data approved for digital and traditional marketing outreach while adhering to consumer data privacy regulations.
- Understand social and economic factors, such as:
 - Transportation
 - Housing and financial instability
 - Food insecurity
 - Social isolation
 - Financial
 - Technology

Focus on the individual

- Strive for proactive, individual-level intelligence that doesn't require patients to be present to provide survey responses.
- Personalize engagement strategies by considering an individual's unique SDOH profile and preferred communication channels.

Integrate with other strategies

- Support decision-making around improvement plans, like those focused on decreasing no-show rates and increasing medication adherence.
- Know how to operationalize teams in support of the SDOH for patients in need.
- Use SDOH for targeted, proactive outreach to schedule telehealth, in-home or in-person appointments and to address the unique needs of each patient or member.
- Inform real-time care planning.



3



Protection

Authenticate a patient identity before sharing sensitive information

Consumers want flexibility to manage all aspects of their healthcare journey themselves. In our [2021 State of Patient Access survey](#), 73% of consumers said they wanted the option of using a portal to communicate with their provider, schedule appointments and review records. However, **54% of patients were concerned about security** when accessing their personal details online — and this proportion increases for younger age groups.

Healthcare security breaches are on the rise, with the [HIPAA Journal](#) reporting that over **38 million healthcare records were exposed, stolen or incorrectly disclosed during 2019, representing nearly 12% of the entire U.S. population.**

Medical identities can be used to access treatment and drugs, make fraudulent benefits claims and even create fake IDs to buy and sell medical equipment. [For providers, a data breach can cause significant reputational damage and a loss of trust with huge financial consequences — each breach costing an average of \\$2.2 million.](#)

Patient trust is at the heart of a successful patient-provider relationship and with the right approach, providers can safeguard vulnerable patient data with confidence.

Your Protection Checklist

Put security measures in place

To balance patient security with convenience, implement technology that uses a multilayered solution with multiple measures, such as:

- **Sign-up screening** that uses identity proofing to ensure users are who they say they are with additional checks on high-risk requests, such as downloading medical records or editing a patient's profile, with further out-of-wallet questions.
- **Login monitoring**, using device intelligence to confirm the patient is using a recognized cell phone, computer or tablet.
- **Rapid response and damage containment** to shut down potential attacks quickly and prevent further damage.


Focus on patient engagement

- Share the steps taken to secure patient information, so patients feel reassured and confident in using the portal.
- Automate patient portal enrollment, but not at the expense of patients' time and effort.



Enabling digital transformation

Building the foundation for confidence in patient identities to enable digital transformation starts with understanding the current state. How providers approach patient interactions is imperative when defining priorities for an identity strategy.

	Answer the following questions:	Yes	No
Given the need for FAST digital transformation, how do you engage with patients today?			
Do you still use the U.S. Postal Service?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you collect patient emails and do email outreach?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a patient portal? If so, how is it being used?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>			
Do you have a limited understanding of your patients?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What challenges do you face with patient engagement?			
<input type="text"/>			
What are your systems like?			
<input type="text"/>			
Do you have multiple EMRs?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do you keep those systems in sync?			
<input type="text"/>			
How do you manage your patients from one system to the next, or as they go from one facility to the next?			
<input type="text"/>			
What kind of patient experience initiatives do you have in place or are underway?			
<input type="text"/>			
How are you personalizing the patient experience?			
<input type="text"/>			
What are you doing to try to improve coordination of care for your patients?			
<input type="text"/>			

Understand the potential impact

It's imperative to comprehend the risk of duplicate records. Mismatched patient records have high consequential ramifications for physicians making treatment decisions or pharmacists preparing prescriptions.

What's the potential human cost of inaccurate missing pieces?

- A surgical procedure given to the wrong patient
- A patient given the wrong medication
- Patient labels put on the wrong blood tests
- A patient given the wrong diagnostic procedure
- Diagnosis based on inaccurate medical history
- Test results getting mixed up with another patient
- A patient being overprescribed opioids
- Sharing PHI with the wrong patient
- Mailing statements to the wrong person
- Failed follow-ups for medication adherence or counseling

In addition to patient safety concerns, the financial impact of incorrect patient matching is a major source of revenue leakage for providers:

Cost up to \$2,000 per patient

Patient identification errors can cost up to \$2,000 per patient. *Source: Health IT Analytics, April 2018*

Around 33% of claims are denied

Around a third of claims are denied on the basis of inaccurate patient identification, costing \$1.5 million per hospital and \$6 billion to the U.S. healthcare system as a whole. *Source: Health IT Analytics, April 2018*

Around \$1,000 for each mismatched record

It costs around \$25 to rework a claim and \$1,000 for each mismatched pair of records. *Source: AAFP Foundation*

Lose up to 30 minutes per shift

Clinicians can lose up to 30 minutes per shift due to patient identification errors. *Source: Healthcare Innovation, December 2016*





Make identity an enterprisewide initiative

Patient identity management can prevent medical identity theft, optimize the revenue cycle, reduce denied claims, prevent duplicate record creation and enhance patient safety — leading to improved financials and boosting bottom lines in the process. Patient identity is an enterprisewide strategy that requires stakeholder buy-in from every part of the organization.

It's the only way to know who a patient is before they show up — to gain insights into who they are and leverage that into engagement initiatives that effectively resonate. Patient identity allows for transforming the patient interaction

before the interaction begins. In today's vastly connected world, consumers expect a seamless patient experience based on accurate and secure data. If other industries have long accomplished this undertaking, why not healthcare?

In the new age of patient information, a single, best patient view is required. [Request a Patient Identity Strategy Session](#) today to understand where your organization stands within the three pillars of patient identity management and how to develop a road map for ensuring you have the most accurate, comprehensive and secure view of today's healthcare consumer.



About Experian Health

At Experian Health, we serve more than 60 percent of U.S. hospitals and more than 7,700 medical practices, labs, pharmacies and other healthcare providers with data-driven platforms and insights that help our clients make smarter business decisions, deliver a better bottom line and establish strong patient relationships. We are part of Experian, the world's leading global information services company, providing us access to deep data and analytics capabilities that complement the strong healthcare heritage rooted in our legacy companies. Our industry-leading solutions span revenue cycle management, identity management, patient engagement, and care management.

For more information, visit experian.com/healthcare and follow us on LinkedIn.



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