

Three Ways to Solve The ‘Patient Support Paradox’

ARLENE PINEDA, Senior Director, Patient Support Services, IQVIA

KRISTINA JONES, Principal, Patient Services Technology & Analytics, IQVIA

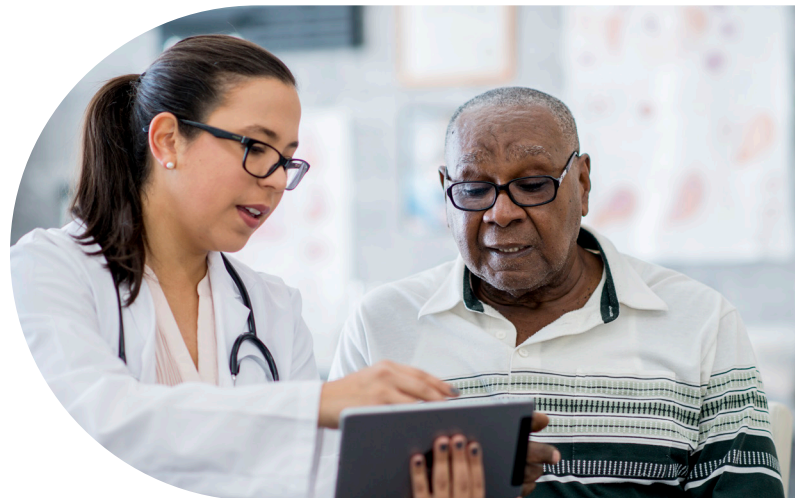
For many patients with complex conditions, the moment of diagnosis marks the end of an arduous process and the beginning of another: the journey to initiating and undergoing treatment. Patient support programs (PSPs) are designed to smooth this journey by meeting patients’ and caregivers’ multifaceted needs.

Reflecting significant investments in people, processes, and technologies, modern PSPs have evolved into patchworks of services supported by various vendors and delivered through multiple systems and channels. Within a PSP, individual teams typically oversee a single “patch” (such as treatment affordability or hub services). However, siloed services often lead to disjointed experiences in which the PSP is pulling the right levers, but at the wrong times.

To illustrate this, imagine a newly diagnosed cancer patient. Emotionally and physically drained, she receives a new onslaught of educational materials about available support services. Unsure where to start, she ends up feeling more alone and overwhelmed. Or consider a patient with a chronic disease who has spent weeks confronting access hurdles. Instead of recognizing where he actually is in his journey, the program sends multiple emails about administering the treatment he can’t yet access .

These fictitious scenarios illustrate what we at IQVIA call the **Patient Support Paradox: large, complex, and expensive support programs that end up making life more difficult for the patients they are meant to serve.**

In our efforts to address this, we have identified several contributing factors, and in this article, offer these insights as an opportunity for reflection and evolution of current PSP structures.



Designing for consumers, not patients


There has been a growing trend in healthcare to adopt strategies other industries typically use within the consumer segment, for example, digital-first approaches and omnichannel engagement. These tactics can be highly effective when promoting brands that involve a comparatively simple, often transactional, customer experience. However, they typically fall short when applied in the complex U.S. healthcare system. Patients are not typical consumers, and while customer centricity as a tenet is critical, it must be approached in a different way in healthcare to achieve the ultimate outcome of a simplified patient experience and improved health outcomes.

Deluged by data, starved for insights

PSPs collect vast quantities of data across various touchpoints and can (compliantly) tap into data about patients' social determinants of health. This can have significant positive impacts on both treatment initiation and adherence, however, the trouble is, most of this data remains fragmented and siloed. Consequently, programs still can't create 360-degree views of patients. Having such insights is key to understanding the actual needs of patients and insights on how to address them properly and create solutions that solve real challenges.

Fragmented technology environments

For years, companies have aimed to use "best-of-breed" vendors for each component of their PSPs. Even a single company can have multiple programs, each with their own collection of in-house systems and/or vendor platforms. When teams use complex, fragmented technology environments, it leads to disjointed experiences that burden the people PSPs are meant to support. Fragmented systems also make it difficult to monitor and improve meaningful performance metrics. The ability to truly measure the impact of any one PSP program relies on the ability to integrate and connect data. Interoperability continues to be a core challenge in the industry, so now is the time that companies may want to consider the tradeoffs of a multi-vendor approach. Additionally, the ability to effectively connect data is the foundation to next generation analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), again underscoring the need to think again about how best to optimize data and metrics now and in the future.



Let's move past the Patient Support Paradox and achieve the true mission of PSPs: meeting patients where they are, with the resources and support they need at each step in the journey. [Contact us](#) to learn more about IQVIA's solutions.



How can we solve the Patient Support Paradox?

Much like the patients they serve, biopharma companies operate within the U.S. healthcare system. No single company can eliminate systemic complexity for patients, caregivers, or providers; however, each company can commit to reducing (if not eradicating) unnecessary complexity within their PSPs.

Here are three ways to start:



Harness data to deeply understand and simplify the patient journey.

This isn't about embracing consumerism or adopting new technologies to generate more insights; it's about connecting data, applying principles of behavioral science, and generating insights about patients' personal journeys. Connecting disparate data sources enables care teams to establish a singular, comprehensive view of a patient's journey. Technologies like AI may help, but only after a program has gotten a handle on ingesting, curating, and using data from multiple sources.



Use fit-for-purpose technology that solves real problems.

Invest in a single technology solution to connect everyone involved in a PSP. A single solution helps identify barriers that might be harder to identify (and resolve) via siloed systems. It eliminates the need for disparate systems and platforms to integrate in ways that were not contemplated and consequently do not work. It also helps monitor and quantify program performance holistically — strengthening connections to actual patient needs, behaviors, and improved outcomes.



Create personalized experiences to improve outcomes.

The World Health Organization has emphasized that social, cultural, political, psychological, and/or economic factors can serve as barriers or drivers of health. Every PSP needs to consider the impact of such factors and how tailored support can help many patients overcome these common obstacles. Consider incorporating behavioral science insights to improve how your programs meet the needs of diverse and individual patients.

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[iqvia.com](https://www.iqvia.com)