



Optum solutions can provide tailored support, so providers can focus on what matters most – patient care.

Nearly three years after it began, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic lingers. Most find themselves marking time with words like “before COVID” or “pre-pandemic.” And it’s easy to think of those times as better days.

It’s true that COVID-19 has presented incredible challenges for health systems, physicians and their staff. But the reality is, the pressures brought on by this global health emergency have only exacerbated the challenges that already existed pre-2020. Staffing shortages certainly pre-date COVID-19 and have worsened.

And burdensome processes were already affecting physicians and their teams. For example, in 2018, 70% of physicians said they spent over 10 hours per week on paperwork and administrative tasks.¹

These factors contribute to the most pressing problem of all: Clinicians don’t have enough time to spend with patients, who are and should be their priority. Good health care relies on good provider-patient relationships. And time spent together builds and nurtures those relationships.

Providers need help now more than ever to free their time so they can focus on developing provider-patient relationships and managing better outcomes. Beyond technology, data and analytics, we believe that tailored support and customer service can help physicians when they need it most. Let’s take a deeper look at what’s monopolizing provider’s time, factors affecting health care efficiencies and real, viable solutions.

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Barriers and admin burdens providers face

The aspiration to create an efficient health care ecosystem remains a work in progress as interoperability and digital enablement continue to be refined. Though we've become better at our ability to use technology to make sure a patient's data follows them, managing that data and its variability remains a challenge that's felt heavily by providers.

In 2020, Medical Economics surveyed physicians and found "paperwork" to be the leading cause of feelings of burnout.² The result is not surprising. The list of administrative burdens is long.

We know from my discussions with physicians that they feel bogged down with things like coding and documentation, exchange of clinical information and managing incentive programs. And even though they can offer huge value for both providers and patients, health plan assessment programs tied to value-based care are especially time-consuming.

Centralizing copious amounts of patient data through EHRs has led to improvements in care coordination between providers and payers, but EHRs are not the single solution to reducing administrative burden. The amount of time physicians spend on EHRs is staggering. A study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine found that physicians were spending nearly half of their time (49%) on EHR and desk work, and less than a third of their time (27%) was devoted to facetime with patients.³

Blueprint for choosing the right relationship

At Optum, we've made it our goal to take on more administrative burden from health plan programs and return millions of hours to provider practices so they can spend more time with patients. We work with physicians to automate or manage processes and give them the tools they need to build lasting, impactful relationships with patients.

1. Mobius MD. Are doctors spending less time with patients? mobius.md/2021/10/09/how-much-time-do-physicians-spend-with-patients/. Oct. 9, 2019. Accessed Aug. 19, 2022.

2. Medical Economics. Top challenges 2021: #1 administrative burdens and paperwork. medicaleconomics.com/view/top-challenges-2021-1-administrative-burdens-and-paperwork. Jan. 15, 2021. Accessed Aug. 19, 2022.

3. Annals of Internal Medicine: Allocation of physician time in ambulator practice: A time and motion study in 4 specialties. [acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/m16-0961](https://doi.org/10.7326/m16-0961). Dec. 6, 2016. Accessed Aug. 19, 2022.

Our model sits at the intersection of providers, patients and payers – helping physicians meet their goals so patients can live better lives. We have access to data that helps us see what payers are looking for so that we can recommend the next best action. And we have found ways to streamline and simplify administrative processes to drive better partnerships between payers and providers. The right solution means that it supports your priorities and increases your digital foothold to meet the needs of those you serve.

When considering a vendor solution, ask these questions:

- How will this health plan service help my patients?
- How will this service help my practice?
- Are the insights offered valuable patient insights?
- Is this vendor/partner/solution going to help with things that might not otherwise have gotten done?
- Are our goals aligned?
- Am I confident the outcomes will be worth the investment?

Rewarding solutions for providers and patients

At Optum we understand that health care is experienced at a very personal level, but how complicated and frustrating administrative processes can be – not to mention the toll they take on providers and patients.

Optum designs health plan services aimed at solving some of the most critical problems faced by providers. The health care industry is ever evolving and changing, and we are here for you and your patients.



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