



Breaking Down Point-of-Care Communication

Marketers should understand that the HCP's waiting room and exam room offer unique opportunities to reach patients who are ready and willing to receive health information. These messages can be delivered in three areas of the office, but must be relevant to the patient's state of mind. This is really a place where the medium is the message.

BY LIZ O'NEIL

The moment of truth for every brand is when a consumer is prepared to take action. The moment of truth for most prescription brands is in the doctor's office.

A person can be at the doctor's office for a well visit or a sick visit or as a caregiver, but in every type of visit the experience is routine. The patient arrives at the doctor's office, signs in and waits. What are they doing for that 15 to 20 minutes while they await their name being called by the nurse? Are they making calls, checking a BlackBerry, listening to an iPod, reading a magazine, watching TV?

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Point-of-care advertising can augment efforts to get DTC promotional activities into doctor's offices. Interactive wallboards featuring multimedia patient education materials can further enhance such efforts.

BY KEITH M. D'ORIO, MA

Consumers are confused. It's a fact. Choices in prescription therapy are confusing. Online sources of information are cluttered and confusing. Branded messages... unbranded education... prescription... OTC... nutraceuticals... all lead to a state of confusion among consumers. In addition, FDA requirements for fair balance, while probably helping to elucidate risk, make it even more confusing for patients. However, most patients indicate that they do want more information.

A significant challenge for DTC managers is to find the best strategies to get their message out to educate patients and optimize ROI. No single tactic is going to be the answer to any brand manager's planning needs. Print advertising and direct mail can be expensive and have the potential to be left unread. New media is exciting but audiences are fragmented, and tac-

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Once they make it into the exam room, they are often left again after the basics are checked by the nurse. A review of why they are visiting, and a quick review of some basic health information: the weigh-in, the blood-pressure check and then they are left sitting on a table waiting for the doctor and likely feeling a bit vulnerable. In this moment of truth, will they remember to ask all the questions they intended? Will they decide something they intended to ask is not so important? Will they lose the courage to bring up something they are not comfortable discussing?

Time is so precious and the lack of it in most offices is clear. Patients are being fit into a very hectic day.

It is in this mindset that patients are seeing point-of-care advertising. This is not home with the kids watching a favorite reality show, nor looking up information on the Web in your home office, nor flipping through a magazine looking for cute ideas for your new bathroom. The experience in the waiting room and the exam room is different because it is in a doctor's office. The nice part for messages that are received in this space is that patients trust the information in the waiting room and place a higher value on the health message they receive, according to findings of the Mars OTC/DTC study. This is really a place where the medium is the message.

Tapping into the teachable moments

Point-of-care communication gives you the opportunity to shape that message. Contextually, the message must be relevant to the patient's state of mind. The doctor's office has three areas where point-of-care messaging can be used effectively. Each of these places provides a teachable moment for the brand. They are: the waiting room, the exam room, and the dialogue between the healthcare provider (HCP) and patient. To address these areas of potential patient contact, there are companies that offer paid advertising opportunities for brands as well as brand materials that are in the offices. All of these touch points need to work together to take advantage of the moment of truth.

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We will review these three places and address some key questions. How can brands use the doctor's office in the most contextually relevant way? How can brands harness new technology to make the patient experience better? How can brands prepare patients, where they are in their journey, to have the best experience with the visit and the outcome of that visit?

The Waiting Room

Pharmaceutical sales representatives have always been a channel for patient education materials and they have also been

a presence in the waiting room. Magazines have always known the value of the public space and have used it to sample publications in the hopes of a patient subscribing once they read it in the waiting room. It seems the importance of this channel is not news to anyone. How we optimize this channel is what the innovation needs to be about. This is the final moment to get the appropriate patient to self identify.

There are many companies that have advertising opportunities for brands in these places. The list of paid media channels that are available in waiting rooms is continuing to expand. Most are traditional consumer media channels taken into the waiting room environment and provide health content. Some of these advertising channels are more technically sophisticated, so brands can customize messages by office or change out creative very quickly. A sample of some but not all of these paid media opportunities and the companies in the space are:

TV networks: Accent Health and Helium Network

Specialty Magazines: MediZine and Health Monitor

Wallboards: Euro RSCG 4D, Accent Health and SMI

Digital Wallboards: Healthy Advice

Traditional consumer magazines: Targeted Media, Inc. can be wrapped with branded patient education material

Tablet PC: Phreesia, InfoSlate

In each case, the advertising vehicle is traditional. It is common to repurpose DTC materials and make small changes to the call-to-action so they can be used in the office. This is a missed opportunity.

As stated earlier, this is a teachable moment and should be used by brands as such. Brands should be harnessing the technology that most adults have in their hands as a way to make the patient experience better. Push the communication to be more about preparing for the talk with the doctor. The message strategy of waiting room messages should be focused on what the unique challenges are with the patient-HCP dialogue. This should not require a complete creative re-do as most brands have this type of information. Most of it lives deep within a brand/company Web site. It may be a diagnostic quiz, a symptom diary or even a discussion guide. Use mobile, SMS and even old-fashioned paper to give them something tangible before they are called into the exam room. Use this teachable moment to help patients find the language to present their health story in a way that generates a productive dialogue with the HCP.

The Exam Room

We often find that the biggest hurdle with patients is getting them to present their health story. This is not the fault of the patient; it is built into the practice of medicine. In most cases,

patients have thought about what they want to discuss. When the HCP comes into the exam room with the medical file in hand, reviewing the notes from the nurse, the patients often go back to acting like patients. Even in this environment of health-empowered self-advocates, when doctors ask pointed, closed-ended questions, patients will often answer them and forget to address their own intended topics of discussion.

There are paid media channels in the exam room, also. Healthy Advice has been in this space with patient education tools for years. Exam room programs that can get a network of sponsored information into this space are focused on patient education and improved dialogue between the healthcare provider and the patient. The programs also provide tools to make explaining a diagnosis easier. And all are developed with-in compliance, of course.

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Contextually, these channels should not be the place for pharma brands to reinforce the same awareness message; this is where you reinforce the importance of patients discussing the impact their condition has on him or herself. This is when patients have to put the diagnostic Q&A into a context that can show impact. Mobile technology is not the best for this space as patients are often asked to shut phones off in the exam room. But brands can give patients a physical reminder of what they want to discuss to help guide them. This teachable moment is about how to tell your story. It is often easier to show a doctor than to explain it. The brands that can give tangible pieces for patients to carry in with them or discover in the channels in the exam room, the more likely the interview will become a dialogue.

The dialogue

In our experience, we have seen the sample take on a role of really being the brand representative. It can be a reminder for the doctor to tell the patient about what to expect. It can also house information for the patient to make it easy to get going. Many brands have in-depth content online or in a RM program, but we only see 2 percent to 10 percent of patients joining those programs. The sample or starter kit really is the first handshake with the brand and should be harnessed as such.

Here again we see innovations in technology that continue to make it more engaging. Companies such as iKyp are developing technologies that are pharma compliant and easy to use for patients, with Web key technology and 2D bar codes. This

can make launching a Web site and getting them to download a desktop or mobile application effortless. The technology does the work for the patient. The teachable moment in the dialogue is at the point-of-care when the prescription is written and the brand has a tangible object to make it easy for the doctor to review what to expect and hand the patient tools to manage those expectations.

The acceptance of health messages is much more expected and it is valued in the doctors' office. At each point in the visit experience there are teachable moments that should be used wisely. For brands that do this well, the moment of truth will be an appropriate patient receiving appropriate treatment with an understanding of what they can expect from treatment and the tools in their hand to help the brand continue to build a relationship. **DTC**

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