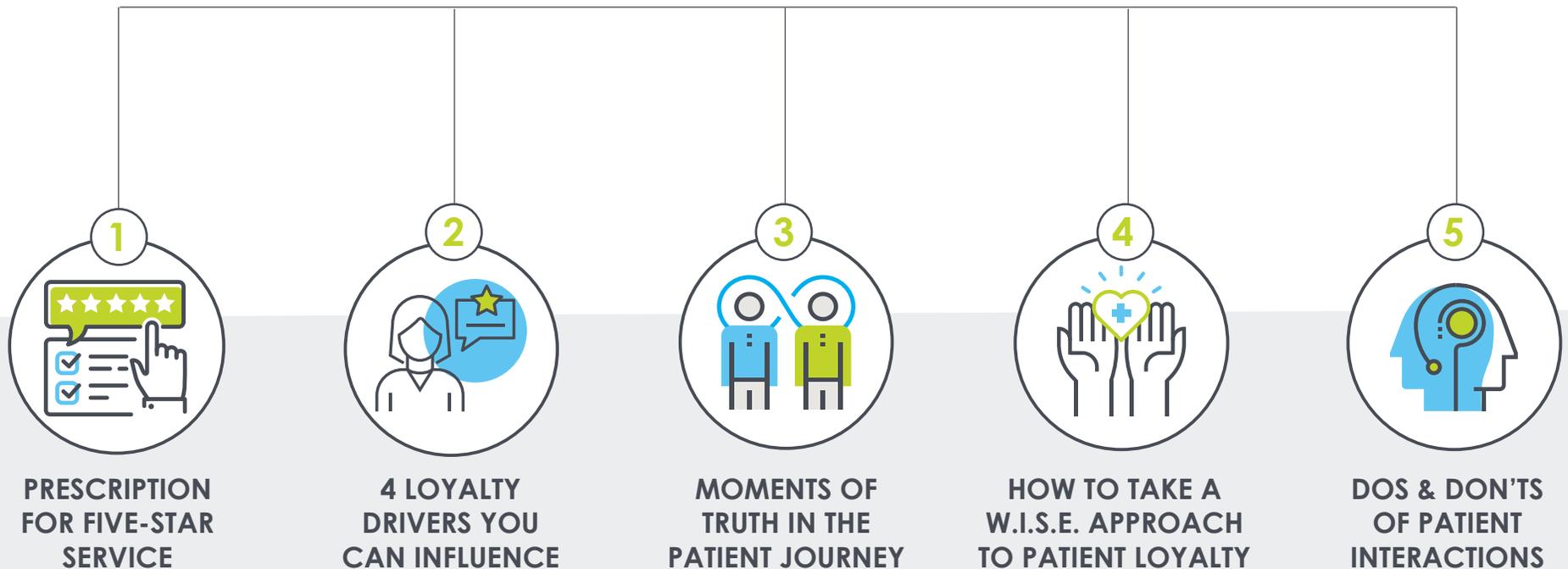


# PATIENT LOYALTY GUIDE

This guide includes five key resources to help healthcare leaders and providers drive high patient satisfaction and gain ongoing patient loyalty.





## PRESCRIPTION FOR FIVE-STAR SERVICE

It's not always doing something wrong that results in a negative review; sometimes, it's only doing the basics for your patients. Here, we examine behaviors that can impact patient perception. Consider this your prescription for 5-star service.



### PREDICTIVE/INTUITIVE CARE & COMMUNICATION

- Along with effective, innovative diagnosis & treatment, shows high levels of interest and respect toward the patient behind the symptoms (hint: write a 'fun fact' in the patient's record to establish familiarity at the next episode of care).
- Sets aside dedicated time for family and/or caregivers to ask questions, walk through the care plan, and understand post-discharge instructions.
- Smoothly incorporates technology into care to communicate with and update patients & caregivers, quickly involves other specialties or departments in the patient's care, and ensures all necessary details are included and readily available for smooth transfer and low question repetition.



### HIGHLY RESPONSIVE CARE & COMMUNICATION

- Along with effective diagnosis & treatment, shows a general proactive interest in the patient's life and situation.
- Invites family and/or caregivers to ask questions.
- Responds kindly to questions from patient, family and/or caregivers.
- Uses technology to efficiently record all necessary details of patient care and demonstrate information to patients & caregivers.




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#### **FAIRLY RESPONSIVE TO NEEDS, DECENT FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION**

- Effective diagnosis and treatment, low proactive interest in patient otherwise.
- Cordial to family and caregivers, allows questions.
- Uses technology to efficiently record all necessary details of patient care.




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#### **SOMEWHAT RESPONSIVE, INFREQUENT COMMUNICATION**

- Inefficient, unclear process of diagnosis and treatment, with no proactive interest shown in patient otherwise.
- Uninterested in family and caregivers, discourages questions.
- Ineffective use of technology realized through repetitive questions & uncoordinated care transitions.




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#### **GENERALLY UNRESPONSIVE, RARE COMMUNICATION**

- Careless (or even incorrect) diagnosis and treatment.
- Shuts down conversation unrelated to specific care episode.
- Shows frustration toward family and caregivers and/or punts questions to nurses/techs rather than answering.
- Demonstrates aggravation with technology.
- Resistance to technology causes tension and issues with care.



## 4 LOYALTY DRIVERS YOU CAN INFLUENCE

A 2017 survey<sup>1</sup> of 192,936 U.S. households found that 40.37% of consumers are not loyal to a hospital or health system for care. As a result of COVID-19, community members have been hesitant to seek care at all, leading to even less commitment or loyalty.

As a result, hospitals need to first build back trust, then work to sustain loyalty—and these four drivers are significantly important focus areas.

<sup>1</sup> <https://nrchealth.com/2017-consumer-loyalty-insights/>

**1 Safety measures, PPE, visible signals:** Before COVID-19, you may have been a top choice in your community based on how new or “fancy” your facility is. Now, you’re being evaluated on how proactive and clear you are about the safety and cleanliness of your space. It’s no longer something patients will assume or take for granted—so make sure to overemphasize what you are doing to ensure the physical and psychological safety of your community.

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**2 Front-line worker support:** More than ever, people are showing they care about the clinical providers and hospital staff. The way you supported your workforce during the pandemic speaks volumes to the community—and it doesn’t stop there. Consumers will keep watching to ensure you are prioritizing the wellbeing and safety of your workers.

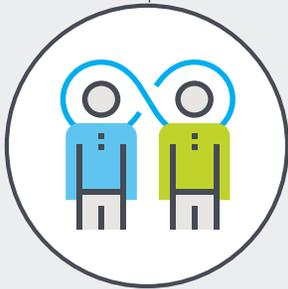
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**3 Virtual options:** The telehealth horse is out of the barn—and it isn’t going back. If you aren’t investing in the accessible, affordable virtual care capabilities that your particular community needs, you will struggle to gain their ongoing respect, trust, and loyalty. Additionally, offering virtual care hours to your providers can help preserve their engagement and health, too.

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**4 Trusted source of information:** As partisan ideals continue to creep into healthcare, your consumers will struggle to know who to listen to: the CDC? The president? The governor? The mayor?

Amid this chaos, present your organization as a neutral and reliable source of information that clearly cares for the health of your community more than any political position. Seek to be a transparent, trustworthy partner to your community.



## MOMENTS OF TRUTH IN THE PATIENT JOURNEY

Though it's always important to focus on patient experience, there are certain moments in patients' care journeys where they will be particularly attuned to the service they are receiving. In these moments, it is imperative to go beyond the basics to ensure not just satisfaction, but true loyalty.

| MOMENTS OF TRUTH  | PATIENT SATISFACTION  | PATIENT LOYALTY  |
|---|---|--|
| <br><b>ED VISIT</b> | <br>Receives needed treatment from competent professionals | <br>Treats the patient's immediate need but then a physician calls the next day to follow up personally |
| <b>ADMITS/TRANSFERS</b>   | Performs admission or transfer smoothly and quickly   | Performs admission or transfer smoothly and quickly—and transition of care to inpatient provider team is seamless  |
| <b>DISCHARGE</b>  | Patient given clear instructions at the time of discharge and has materials to reinforce the instructions once they return home               | Handles the discharge through a care coordination center that acts as a navigator who continues to communicate and support their needs after they return home.                             |



## HOW TO TAKE A W.I.S.E. APPROACH TO PATIENT LOYALTY

Kenneth J. Heinrich, MD, FACEP, SVP and Group Medical Officer at SCP Health recommends hospitals take a “**W.I.S.E.**” approach to patient loyalty. The key to creating consistent patient experiences and ongoing loyalty is exceeding patient expectations on four fronts: **W**ait times, **I**nformation delivery, **S**ymptom reductions, and **E**xpressive quality.

### **W**AIT TIMES

Manage expectations to improve perceptions. Give realistic expectations and over-estimate rather than underestimate. Do not make statements such as “The doctor will be with you in one minute” or “I will go check and be back in five minutes to let you know.” Set yourself up for promises you can keep, not those you can't.

### **I**NFORMATION DELIVERY

Share as much information as possible. Patients' sense of uncertainty and psychological distress increases when they feel uninformed. Always promptly update patients on:

- Delays, if they occur
- Types and reasons for tests
- Diagnosis (in layperson language)
- Reason for admission
- Discharge instructions;
- What you are doing now (e.g., performing an EKG) and what will be happening next (the doctor will read the EKG)

### **S**YMPTOM REDUCTION

Recognize that symptoms are subjective. Patients all experience pain and other symptoms in their own ways, and expect to be understood and treated accordingly. Poor symptom relief can actually be perceived by the patient as lack of caring. To ensure patients feel properly treated:

- Document pain and other adverse symptoms;
- Address pain, fever, vomiting, and other unpleasant symptoms;
- Re-document the response;
- Discuss treatment options with the patient;
- Explain your approach without personal judgment (including if you are unable to relieve adverse symptoms at the time of the visit).

### **E**XPRESSIVE QUALITY

Understand that faster is not necessarily better. Take time with each patient, be courteous, and express genuine concern. Patient satisfaction and ultimate loyalty is more affected by the expressive (caring) aspect of treatment than the technical (curing).



## DOS & DON'TS OF PATIENT INTERACTIONS

These simple tips will help providers and leaders go the extra mile, build patient trust, and earn longtime patient loyalty.

### DO:



#### TEACH PROVIDERS HOW TO COMMUNICATE AT THE BEDSIDE

- Use clear language & show interest in the patient beyond just this episode of care
- Get on the patient's eye level to establish equality & trust



#### DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING FAMILY/CAREGIVERS WHEN APPROPRIATE

- Set a moment aside to get to know their situation & field all questions
- Ensure they know where to find restrooms, cafes, & other rest areas
- Explain treatment plan & post-discharge plan clearly & thoroughly



#### ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF INCLUSION & RESPECT, BOTH INTERNALLY & EXTERNALLY

- Educate staff about how to recognize & eliminate unconscious bias
- Have high standards in hiring only employees who will build up a positive environment
- Consistently highlight the importance of teamwork & respect throughout all roles, tenures, backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, & more
- Set an example of inclusion & communication by inviting diverse sets of employee representatives into decision-making conversations



#### CREATE A HEALTHY BALANCE OF CONSISTENCY & CREATIVITY

- Establish clear guidelines & lean on technology to reduce unnecessary care variation
- Encourage innovation in approaches to clinical care, operational processes, revenue cycle, etc.
- Highlight wins in both reliability & "thinking outside the box"
  - emphasizing the high importance of both to the effectiveness & sustainability of the facility at large



#### SHARE SPECIFIC PATIENT FEEDBACK & COMMENTS WITH PROVIDERS

- Make sure that providers feel appreciated for their efforts & let them know when they've been recognized for it by their patients
- Encourage the feedback process by handing out photo sheets with names & credentials of your provider team, helping them remember who they saw & have a more personalized experience



## DON'T:

-  OVERLOOK INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & LACK OF WILLINGNESS TO COLLABORATE BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS
-  BURNOUT CARE TEAM THROUGH INEFFICIENT SCHEDULING
-  ALLOW INEFFECTIVE, DISCONNECTED CARE EXPERIENCES TO GO UNADDRESSED
-  LAG BEHIND ON TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS
-  EXCLUDE STAFF FROM DECISION-MAKING DISCUSSIONS
-  FAIL TO EDUCATE ON INCLUSION, COMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGY USE, INNOVATION, COMMUNITY DYNAMICS, ETC.
-  IGNORE PATIENT REVIEWS, CONSIDERING THEM INCONSEQUENTIAL
-  ALLOW STAFF TO VIEW PATIENTS, FAMILIES, & CARETAKERS ON A SURFACE LEVEL OR APPROACH COMMUNICATING WITH THEM SIMPLY AS A TASK TO CHECK OFF
-  PRIORITIZE PRODUCTIVITY OVER PRECISION OR PATIENCE — ALL THREE ARE IMPORTANT TO BALANCE