Going Mobile-First

7 Reasons Why Your Healthcare Organization Should Adopt a Mobile-First Patient Intake Strategy

Phreesia
96% of Americans own a cell phone

68% of healthcare organizations use text messages to remind patients about their appointments

48% of patients prefer text message appointment reminders

59% of patients say they would choose a primary care doctor who offers a mobile app over one who does not
Whether texting a friend, responding to work emails, booking a flight or buying a new product, today’s consumers use cell phones for countless everyday tasks—to communicate, work, travel, shop, manage their finances and more. Perhaps that’s because nearly everyone in the U.S. has one. The vast majority of Americans—96%—now own a cell phone of some kind. As mobile technology continues to play an increasingly important role in daily life, the demand for mobile options in healthcare also is rising. Consumerism continues to reshape the healthcare landscape, and patients today are looking for the same convenience and service-oriented features in healthcare they’re used to experiencing in other industries, such as retail and banking. Their preferences are clear—and providers are taking note. A growing number of healthcare organizations are using mobile devices to improve patient care and facilitate efficiencies within care teams.

There are numerous ways that mobile technology can improve the patient experience, from streamlining the check-in process and facilitating payments to supporting more efficient patient-provider communication. At the same time, mobile helps healthcare organizations save time, improve operations, engage patients in their care and boost patient satisfaction and retention. For patients and providers alike, a “mobile-first” intake strategy is not only better, it’s essential.

This white paper highlights seven ways that mobile technology improves the intake experience for patients, providers and staff, and demonstrates why healthcare organizations that employ a mobile-first intake strategy are well-positioned to succeed in a rapidly changing healthcare system.
1. MOBILE IS CONVENIENT.

As consumerism redefines the healthcare industry, a growing number of healthcare providers recognize the importance of aligning their processes with patient preferences for convenience. Mobile intake offers patients the convenient, service-oriented features they’re used to finding in other industries, such as retail, travel and banking. At the same time, mobile gives patients the flexibility to check in for their appointments at home or on the go or from their own device in the waiting room, while offering a more private, secure registration experience.

There’s no question about where patients stand on the subject: According to a Black Book Research study, 93% of patients said they expect to use digital tools to interact with their healthcare providers. And as out-of-pocket costs continue to rise, patients are looking for the same convenient options for paying their medical bills that they have for other purchases. The benefits are twofold: Mobile gives patients a convenient way to pay copays and balances ahead of time via automated options like card on file and payment plans, and mobile streamlines the collections process to ensure healthcare organizations get paid.

2. MOBILE ALIGNS WITH PATIENTS’ PREFERENCES.

When given the choice between using paper, office hardware or their personal mobile device for intake, most patients are likely to choose mobile registration. In a survey of 2,000 patients conducted by The Harris Poll, 59% said they would choose a primary care doctor who offers a mobile app over one who does not. Furthermore, a 2017 study from the National Center for Biotechnology Information found that text messages rank among patients’ most preferred types of appointment reminders. Mobile intake allows patients to use their own trusted device that doesn’t require user names, passwords and log-ins. It also gives them a quick and easy way to stay connected to their providers, keep track of appointment times, follow-up care plans and payments. At the same time, mobile intake offers healthcare organizations a valuable opportunity to meet patients’ expectations and improve their overall experience.

3. MOBILE APPEALS TO PATIENTS OF ALL AGES.

While millennials often stand out for their technology use, mobile intake benefits patients across a broad age range. Contrary to the common perception that older patients are reluctant to embrace new technology, research shows that’s far from the truth. According to Pew Research Center, 91% of adults age 65 and older have a cell phone and 53% have a smartphone. Additionally, more than 90% of smartphone owners over age 50 text weekly, according to data from the annual Simmons National Consumer Survey. Additionally, in an article from consulting firm McKinsey & Company,
the authors dispel the **myth** that only young people use technology to manage their healthcare. The researchers found that while millennials were more likely to schedule online appointments, check their healthcare information or text their provider, a significant and growing number of adults age 65 and older are embracing technology when given the opportunity.

### Seniors use Phreesia Mobile

In an analysis of nearly four million patients across Phreesia's network, one-third, or **33%** of seniors (age 66+) who were sent an appointment prompt via text or email completed their check-in on their mobile device.

### Across age groups, Phreesia users prefer mobile intake options

When Phreesia surveyed its own network on how its users like to be reminded about their appointments, the percentage of patients who preferred text message reminders hovered close to the 50% mark across age groups:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<td>35-44</td>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<td>65+</td>
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As well as boosting patient engagement and loyalty. It also can improve health outcomes. Studies show that mobile approaches to patient engagement, such as text message-based interventions, support care coordination and help ensure that patients stick with follow-up care, including medication adherence. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association (JAMIA)* examined how mobile patient engagement tools helped improve medication adherence in a group of diabetic patients. When researchers sent the patient group a series of text reminders to take their medication and follow their care plans, 80% responded and engaged with the messages. In a separate study from *JAMA Open Network*, researchers who analyzed text-based interventions for women with sexually transmitted infections found that patients who received text-message reminders were more likely to see their primary care doctors, take their medications and follow preventive care recommendations.

In today’s value-based care healthcare environment, organizations that take advantage of opportunities to align with patients’ technology preferences, including mobile communications, will be more successful and better-equipped to engage them in their care.

### 5. MOBILE IS FASTER AND MORE EFFICIENT FOR STAFF

From online scheduling to automated appointment reminders, a mobile-first patient intake strategy is one of the most effective ways to streamline operations and boost staff efficiency. According to Physicians Practice’s “2018 Mobile Health Survey Results,” more than 75% of the website’s readers said they used mobile
health in their practice on a weekly basis. Mobile intake provides efficient options for sending patients automated appointment confirmations and consents, reducing call volumes and freeing up staff to focus on providing the care patients want and need. Mobile intake also gives patients the opportunity to update their medical and demographic information before their appointments, improving wait times and saving staff the headache of dealing with paper forms. In addition, mobile intake reduces the potential for data entry errors, since patients have more time to complete forms prior to their arrival, and staff don’t have to worry about manually entering information into the EHR.

6. MOBILE MEETS PATIENTS WHERE THEY ARE.

What’s one of the easiest ways to improve the patient experience? Meet patients where they are, and now more than ever, that’s online. In 2018, mobile use accounted for more than half of worldwide web traffic, according to data analysis firm Statista. Providers who leverage mobile technology for registration, clinical workflows, payments and satisfaction surveys can engage with patients before, during and after their visit, on a platform where they’re sure to be reached. They can also improve their bottom line in the process. For example, automated text-message appointment confirmations remind patients about their upcoming visits and help cut down on no-shows, which cost healthcare providers hundreds of dollars per day. And mobile payment options save patients the hassle of having to remember to bring a credit card or checkbook to their appointment, helping to boost time-of-service collections. Finally, healthcare organizations can use mobile to send patients post-visit satisfaction surveys and collect real-time feedback that helps them track their Net Promoter Score and comply with programs like the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS).

7. MOBILE REDUCES A RELIANCE ON HARDWARE.

When healthcare organizations incorporate mobile into their intake strategy, they reduce their need for buying, maintaining and troubleshooting intake hardware. A single hardware malfunction can take hours to repair, adding to patient wait times, creating front-desk bottlenecks and diverting staff from more important clinical tasks. Mobile intake helps lessen the impact of these incidents by offering an alternative check-in option for patients while reducing the labor burden on staff. At the same time, it allows healthcare organizations to cut back on cleaning, repairing and replacing hardware, helping them boost their bottom line and improve overall office workflow. Healthcare organizations that aren’t ready for a full transition to mobile intake can leverage it alongside hardware options in a hybrid approach, allowing patients to choose their preferred intake tool for managing their care.

Save time with Phreesia In-Office Mobile: Check-in time for patients using Phreesia Mobile is 30% faster than for patients who use check-in hardware.
When Orem Family Medicine, a four-provider clinic in northern Utah, started using Phreesia Mobile, they wanted to help save patients and staff time, improve office visits and offer a more consumer-friendly intake experience. The move to Mobile was championed by Dr. Steven Berry, a family medicine physician at the practice, which is part of Revere Health, the largest independent multi-specialty physician group in Utah.

“Dr. Berry really wanted every patient to be able check in online before their visit,” said Michele Kimmel, Department Manager at Orem Family Medicine. “He is very forward-thinking and all about making things quick and efficient.”

Instead of just giving patients the option to check in on their own device, the practice decided to make it their default workflow—a decision that has resulted in high utilization rates. More than 88% of Orem Family Medicine’s patients now complete their check-in using Mobile, either prior to their appointment or when they arrive at the clinic. The practice uses its PhreesiaPads only for those patients who don’t have a smartphone, who forgot to bring their phone, or for the occasional patient who expressly asks to use a Pad.

Each morning, the staff send a text message containing a check-in link to every patient scheduled for that day who has not yet preregistered.

“Those patients already received an automated text message when they made their appointment, but we give it one more push,” Kimmel explained. “If patients haven’t checked in yet when they arrive, we ask them to use the link we texted to them earlier or we send another text message right to their phone. Then we explain that they will use that link to check in and pay their copay.”

Patients have embraced the mobile workflow because it takes less time and because they like using their own devices. Kimmel says she heaps praise on patients when they check in before their appointment, hoping to reinforce the behavior.

“I tell them they are my favorite patient of the day since it makes things go so much faster,” she said. “We’ve even had a few patients who were in and out in less than 10 minutes, including the time spent seeing their provider.”

Staff like the new workflow, too, because it’s more efficient and gives them more time to engage with patients. Other Revere Health practices have taken notice, too. When the organization recently held Gemba walks, a Lean process-improvement technique in which leaders from one site visit another site to gather ideas, leaders from seven Revere Health practices chose to visit Orem Family Medicine and observe its intake workflow.

“We’re kind of known as Revere Health’s leading-edge clinic because we like change, and we’re always willing to try new things,” Kimmel explained.


Phreesia gives healthcare organizations a suite of robust applications to manage the patient intake process. Our innovative SaaS platform engages patients in their care and provides a modern, consistent experience, while enabling healthcare organizations to optimize their staffing, boost profitability and enhance clinical care.

To find out how Phreesia can give your organization the capacity for more, visit [Phreesia.com](http://Phreesia.com)