

Five tips to build consumer trust with patient storytelling

Enhance patient stories for a successful marketing campaign

Selecting a post-acute setting for follow-up care has never been an easy choice for patients and families. Acute and post-acute partners work hard to provide patients objective measures to select a post-acute option. Despite this, many decisions ultimately come down to invariable factors (geography or insurance coverage) or subjective measures (online reviews or recommendations from family and friends).

Why are online reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations so compelling to consumers? These first-hand experiences convey to patients and families, who are often unfamiliar with post-acute care, what they can reasonably expect post-discharge.

Covid-19 pandemic warrants a change in providers' approach to patient storytelling

Post-acute and senior organizations have used patient testimonials to provide consumer insight into the post-acute experience for some time now. But previous stories that focused on socialization and community may no longer be as effective. **Covid-19 presented new challenges to gaining trust as misperceptions around post-acute care became widespread.**

New—and ongoing concerns—related to post-acute and senior care



Visitation



Safety



Community and social activity



Social isolation or loneliness

Patient stories are an effective way to combat the growing mistrust of post-acute providers. Sharing positive patient stories that highlight the safety and friendliness of care will help address common concerns held by prospective patients. This is an increasingly important tool to help educate patients on what they can expect from your organization moving forward, especially given Covid-19 related restrictions that limit direct interactions between post-acute providers and potential patients.

To help, this document contains tips to enhance your patient stories and maximize the value your organization, as well as prospective patients and families, derive from them.



Tip #1: Ensure patients have a baseline understanding of the service you are promoting.

In contrast to the hospital or other acute care settings, prospective patients and families tend to have less familiarity with what post-acute care entails. Improve patient awareness of the services your organization offers by covering details such as why a patient required your organization's care, what specific services were provided, and their impact on patient recovery.



Tip #2: Proactively address the patient and family concern in your messaging.

Inaccurate perceptions of post-acute services—specifically SNFs and senior care settings—often serves as a barrier to patient willingness to receive post-acute care. Address common patient fears associated with post-acute services—like social isolation, safety shortcomings, feelings of neglect—in your messaging to make patients and families feel more comfortable choosing your organization.



Tip #3: Focus on key factors—like quicker recovery or patient comfort—that are most meaningful to your target audience.

Understand and highlight the care outcomes that will matter most to specific audiences. For example, patients selecting a provider for short-term rehabilitation services will likely value stories about speed of recovery, changes in patient function, or skills your organization helped patients recover. In contrast, patients and families opting to receive long-term dementia care will likely find information about patient experience and comfort more valuable than quantitative metrics. Ultimately, emphasize specific care outcomes in patient stories based on the decision-making factors that matter most to your audience.



Tip #4: Embrace virtual storytelling, like day-in-the-life videos, virtual tours, podcasts, or virtual Q&A sessions.

Patients and families increasingly turn to the internet to understand and compare their post-discharge options. Use this opportunity to convey the patient experience through different modes of communication. For example, post a day-in-the-life at your organization video, virtual tours of your facility and patient rooms, podcasts featuring your patients speaking to their experiences, or Q&As with current residents. These options are a good opportunity to enhance consumer understanding of how your organization excels at delivering a strong patient experience.



Tip #5: Incorporate the frontline staff perspective.

Prospective patients rely heavily on their interactions with post-acute staff when weighing their options for where to receive care. Incorporate perspective of staff involved in direct caregiving (RNs, CNAs, HHAs) to make your consumer-facing stories as compelling as possible. Consider using online videos or written testimonials to share staff experience in caring for different patients at your organization with the goal of building patient and family trust in your staff and your organization as a whole.