

## The Patient Journey: A Tool for Market Access?

*A greater understanding of the patient journey is rapidly becoming an essential tool for market access.*

By [Behsad Zomorodi](#) on **Aug 17, 2017**

What is a patient journey, and why does it matter so much for market access? Should the healthcare profession be focusing more on the patient journey, and what benefit would that have for future sufferers?

These are critical questions, especially given that the patient journey is an invaluable tool in:

- Developing action plans to address issues faced by patients during treatment
- Rolling out patient support programs
- Communicating the potential benefits of a given product to increase its value among customers or stakeholders.

The 'patient journey' is the complete story of a patient's experience in the healthcare system – from the onset of the symptoms to treatment, covering all the steps of care. It follows the 'patient pathway', tracking the number of patients from the diagnosis stage.

One of the main advantages of understanding the patient journey is that it shows the real-life situation, with all its unpredictable factors and hurdles, rather than an idealized picture of a patient following treatment guidelines in perfect circumstances. Following such a journey helps to easily and effectively identify steps where healthcare is falling short, as well as highlighting inefficiencies (both in terms of treatment time and cost), offering the possibility of giving patients calmer and more welcoming experiences.

### **A market access issue?**

Mapping the patient journey can be critical to enhancing market access for a medicine. Observing and gathering data allows us to:

- Develop a deeper knowledge about the product and its efficiency
- Identify key stakeholders and their level of influence on patients at each step of the journey (eg, the role of the family and friends in choosing a physician)
- Identify possible challenges and bottlenecks during the journey, including the average waiting time to complete a diagnostic procedure, or to get a doctor's appointment

- Identify skills and capabilities required to improve contact points
- Deploy existing treatment guidelines and provide a powerful framework to capture the patient pool at each stage
- Gain insights into patient preferences, needs and difficulties during the journey
- Determine a realistic picture of the number of patients being treated with a specific drug (a better idea of how many patients require treatment offers a better place to commercialize a product and plan the market access strategy)
- Gain a better insight into the novelties and benefits of a given product, making the product more appealing to stakeholders
- Identify influencers and address patients' future needs.

By considering all aspects of the patient journey, we are far better able to understand the existing setup when it comes to managing diagnosis and treatment. We can also develop patient assistance and support programs to improve awareness of, and treatments for, a disease.

### **Wide-ranging benefits**

Companies can use patient journeys to improve a wide range of activities and get real results. They can be used to:

- Root strategies in the real-life situation
- Improve communication with stakeholders at each touch point
- Prioritize important patient segments
- Augment launch excellence by targeting sets of patients with accurate communication
- Enable commercial and marketing teams to close the information gaps as they seek to implement market access strategies
- Design customized patient support programs based on real-life evidence.

The use of patient journey data stands to benefit everyone; patients (through empowerment programs), commercial (by targeting the right patient segment) and the company more widely. Given the potential benefits, pharmaceutical companies should develop a robust mechanism to design effective patient journeys, which could prove instrumental when it comes to bridging treatment gaps and improving quality of life for countless patients around the world.

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