



Inbound Patient Support: Post-Pandemic Trends & Challenges

An Amplity Health Article

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COVID-19 Medical, Emotional, and Financial Hardship

In addition to the mindboggling physical suffering caused by COVID-19, the pandemic also delivered untold emotional and financial blows to millions of people across the globe. The World Economic Forum reports that “the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown caused 114 million people to lose their jobs over 2020.” These job losses, and the loss of health insurance that often followed, dramatically affected patients’ ability to pay for the medicines they need. But the damage went far beyond just the pocketbook.

For many individuals, unemployment brings with it a profound sense of loss, hopelessness, and isolation. Sadly, just when they need an empathetic ear and a caring touch from their personal Health Care Provider (HCP) to help them navigate the new healthcare landscape, patients and caregivers around the world have been unable or unwilling to see their doctor. Accenture research shows that 78% of HCPs saw a decrease in the number of patients visiting their practice during COVID-19. Some patients can’t afford an office call, some are hesitant to visit any healthcare setting because of COVID fear, and others are so emotionally depleted — because of their gloomy employment and financial situation — they won’t make it the effort. And while telemedicine visits have been a gap filler in some cases, in many settings it has taken up only a small portion of the slack.

The truth is that this recent COVID-related experience highlights and reinforces the call for biopharmaceutical manufacturers to take a more direct patient-centric approach to their marketing strategy by adding more opportunities that allow patients to initiate a two-way conversation.

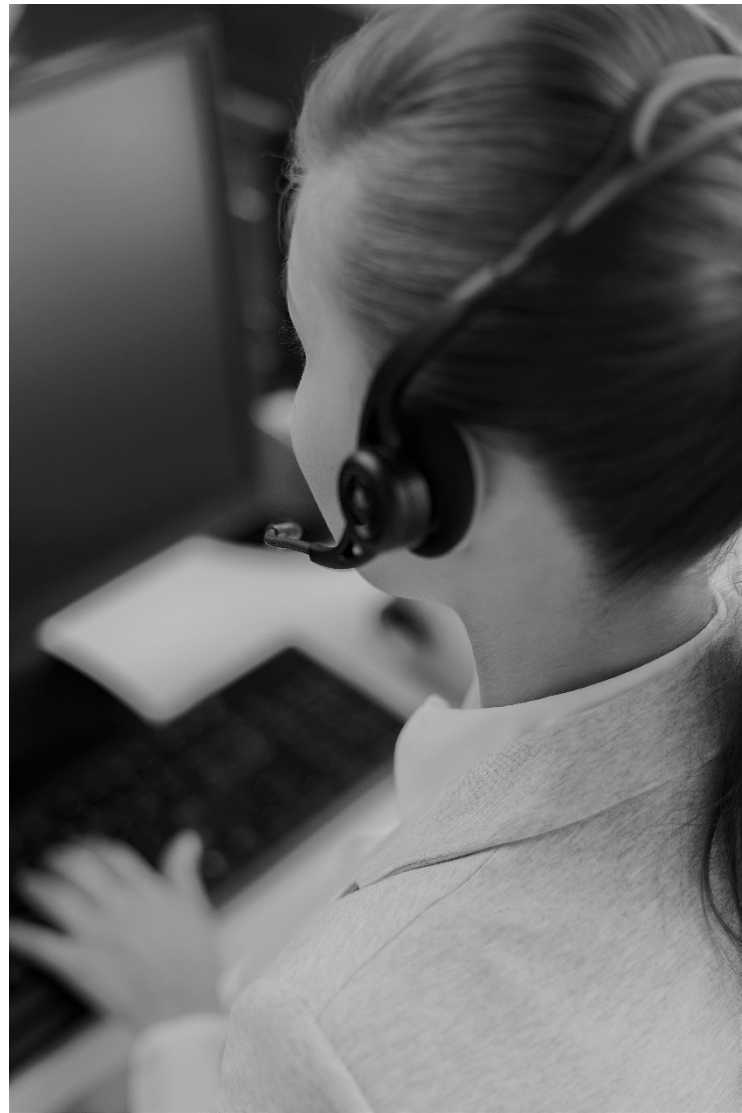
As noted by PharmaTimes, “patients want to be treated as people, and in our digital age, this is not always easy. Pharma can benefit greatly from bridging this gap and creating an approachable brand that patients feel they can engage with.” In other words, during these times of mandated or self-imposed distancing and loneliness...

Pharma companies can and should make it simple, painless, and free for patients to communicate directly with the company that develops and sells their medicines.

Inbound Call Centers: Fast, Easy, Effective

Inbound call centers are one of the fastest, easiest, and most effective ways to accomplish that goal, and they have worked overtime during COVID. Fortune recently described J.D. Power call center research from May and June of 2020 in which the “Average Handle Time” (call length) had increased for 55% of respondent companies. “That reflected an increased complexity of calls, but also an increased degree of interaction between agents and customers,” said Fortune. For many patients, toll-free lines connecting directly to pharma manufacturers may be one of the few care-support lifelines patients can access or afford these days.

Direct patient support should be a critical component of any brand’s commercialization strategy. And while drug makers have always considered it a best practice to have a reimbursement resource of some type for their patients, **today’s patient support has evolved in sophistication to include an expanded array of essential components:**



Adherence and support programs



Case management



Copay card enrollment and activation



DTC campaign enrollment



Patient support programs



Reimbursement management

As manufacturers prepared for the number of calls from both patients and HCPs to climb to unprecedented levels, the need for high-quality on-demand customer care became more evident than perhaps ever before.

Inbound teams have suddenly found themselves on the front lines of the battle, and many are struggling to maintain steady footing.

Regrettably, many of Pharma's outsourced patient support vendors were unprepared at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, Amplity was well prepared to shift its teams to fully remote operation seemingly overnight.

Post-Pandemic Call Center Traffic & Trends

Amplity's inbound call volume has increased throughout the coronavirus experience, and our patient support teams have efficiently handled several types of common requests:

Access to medication

- How do I get my medication? My HCP office is closed/hours are confusingly irregular because of the pandemic
- How do I navigate NDC blocks, tiered benefits, prior authorizations, etc.?

Cost of medication

- I lost my insurance; how can I still get access to my medication?
- I'm on an Income-Qualified Patient Assistance Program for the first time – I don't understand how to move forward?
- I need support with my copay
- I need to explore alternative financial support options but don't know where to start

Adverse events

- Many callers don't realize that their experience is an adverse event – e.g., a patient calls about cost and also mentions a side effect – and it's up to the trained representative to be able to recognize it

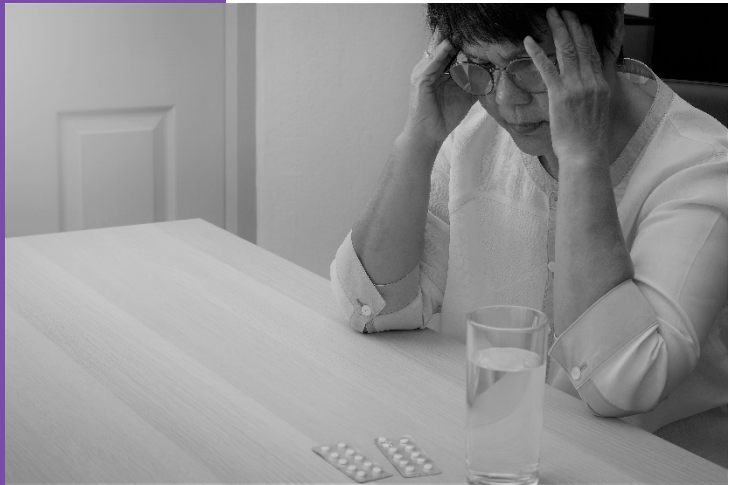
Product inquiries

- How to store medication (refrigeration?)
- Can I cut a pill in half?
- What if I miss a dose?
- Complaints

Re-directing calls

- Triaging calls to the proper department such as medical information or pharmacies

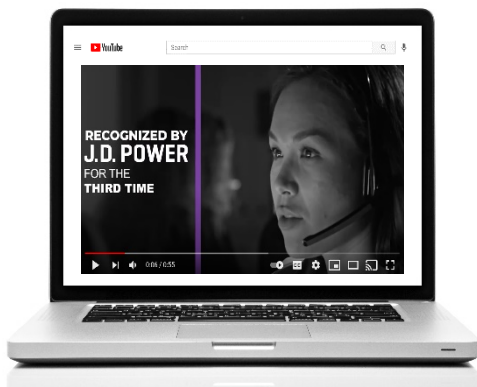
Emotionally Intelligent Patient Support



Notably, during these months of COVID-induced isolation, Amplity's inbound teams have become much more than just "question answerers." **For many patients and caregivers, our call center agents also provide critical emotional support that lifts their spirits and enables them to keep pushing forward in the quest for better health and wellbeing.**

Amplity's inbound call center agents are specially trained in empathy and listening skills, so they are prepared to offer the encouragement callers need during these difficult days. They work to genuinely hear a caller's situation, ready to offer whatever solution is necessary to meet the need. Moreover, our teams meet with established support groups for therapeutic areas we serve, learning from those groups what it's like to have the disease, search for care, access and afford the right treatments, etc.

For many patients, it is this TLC approach that sets Amplity apart from other call center experiences; but, it's not just patients who recognize Amplity's call center support quality...



For the third time, Amplity Health's Customer Service Contact Center has been recognized by J.D. Power for providing "An Outstanding Customer Service Experience" as an Outsourcer for Phone Support.*

This coveted recognition is granted after the successful completion of a comprehensive survey measuring customer satisfaction, operational excellence, loyalty, and advocacy for the assisted phone channel, the interactive voice response (IVR) routing and self-service channels, and the Web self-service channel. JD Power conducts process reviews and staff interviews through an onsite evaluation

conducted by industry experts, comparing our operations to the 313 established best practices that drive operational excellence and customer satisfaction.

*J.D. Power 2020 Certified Customer Service Program recognition is based on successful completion of an evaluation and exceeding a customer satisfaction benchmark through a survey of recent servicing interactions. For more information, visit www.jdpower.com/cc



Amplity's Patient Support Solutions

Amplity's patient-centric approach to customer care provides patients and Health Care Professionals with multiple communication channels to gain access to critical information, including phone, chat, SMS, email, video, and co-browsing.

We recruit emotionally-intelligence agents that have natural empathetic abilities. Understanding a caller's problem is a fundamental skill for any customer service agent, but we only recruit representatives with demonstrable, instinctual ability to be truly patient centric.

When you partner with Amplity, you can rely on us to go the extra mile. Trust our Patient Support representatives to provide a listening ear and an empathetic response, followed by actionable information. Each of our Patient Support representatives are continuously trained on proven techniques to deliver top-notch customer service. Our teams continue to meet the J.D. Power standards of excellence as an outsourced supplier of pharmaceutical phone support.

We provide our clients with a comprehensive patient-centric view of their brands by recording and analyzing inbound customer care calls and merging that information with patient data from the existing insights database of physician interactions.

Whether you're looking to upskill your existing sales teams or partner with us to overlay your field sales channel, we can help. [Click here to contact us](#) when you're ready to discuss how we can partner.

