

Ten Inexpensive Patient Experience Tools To Create Empathy



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Introduction and Overview

The patient experience encompasses much more than the time spent as a patient at your facility. It begins with awareness and information seeking and extends long after discharge and receiving the final bill.

According to the Beryl Institute, the patient experience is:

The sum of all **interactions**, shaped by an organization's **culture**, that influence patient **perceptions** across the **continuum** of care.

- The Beryl Institute

Often organizations are faced with the daunting challenge of finding meaningful ways to connect with patient needs, often constrained by budgets.

In this paper, we have identified a few practices organizations can use to better engage patients and ensure patient experience management remains a strategic priority.

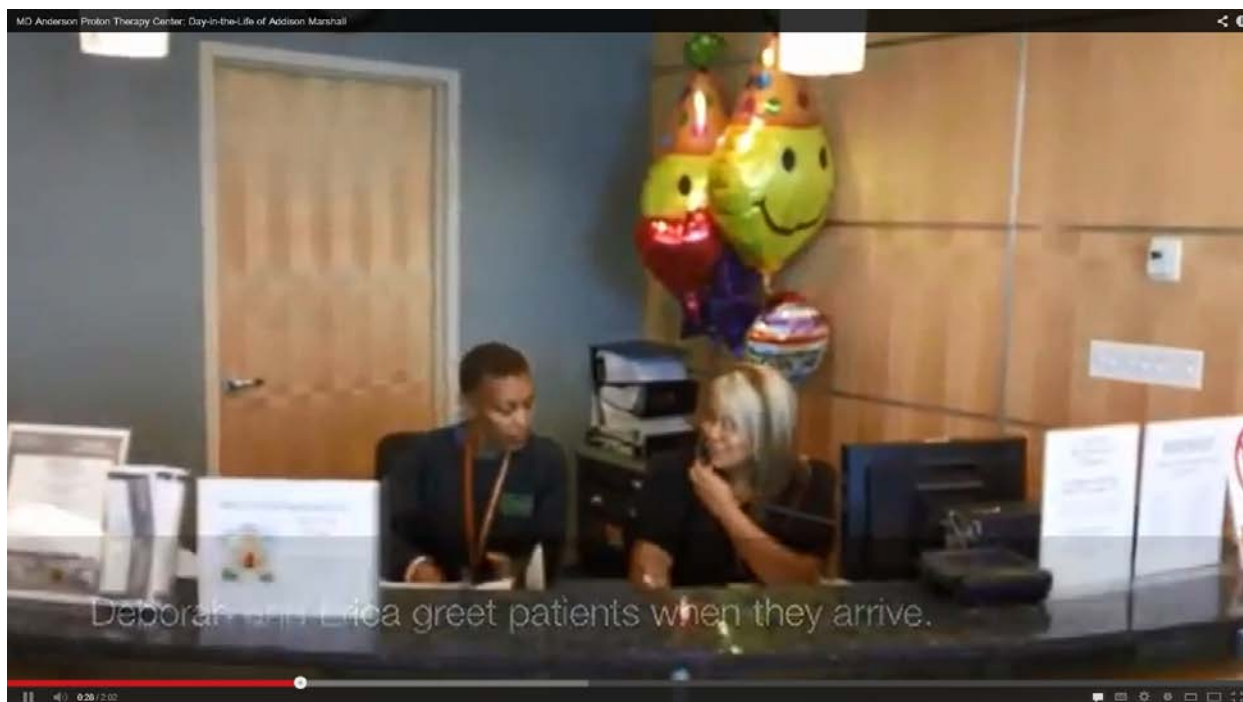
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Flip Cam

Patients can tell you a lot, or they can show you more with a flip cam. Enchanted patients will volunteer to provide you a first person view of what it is like to be your patient. From the preparation to parking to the staff with whom they interact, these videos are both authentic representations of the experience.

MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center has used such to great effect in promotion on You Tube. Through this low-cost video, staff and prospective patients are able to understand the phases of the patient experience and introduce the center in an authentic way.

Special note: It will be important to stage such as HIPAA would prohibit videos being taken of other patients.



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Digital Audio Recorder

Conducting in-depth interviews with patients to understand their functional and emotional needs is a best practice. However, all too often, interviewers will translate comments into simplified notes. This takes away from the ability of the interviews to create empathy among the staff members as much is expressed in the tone and the real language patients use (not “consultant-ese”).

As you speak with patients about their experience, be sure to ask them about their expectations and try to break such down into each phase, as these expectations and whether they are met change across their entire journey.

Of course, please be sure to obtain consent from the patient to record the conversation.

Feelings of Care and Ease



Connectedness with other Patients



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Persona Posters

It is easy to forget who the patient is. What are their goals, behaviors and needs? What do they look like? What would they say if presented with your latest idea?

Persona posters can help drive decisions and serve as a meaningful proxy for patients as decisions are made. From messaging to process improvements, the persona can remind stakeholders of these patient needs in a meaningful way.

This can also be used for your referring physicians, as in the example below:



"I am an expert in my specialty. Almost every case I refer is complex. For rare cases or those that require special technology, I need a physician at the top of their field with very specific expertise- distance to travel is less important."

GOALS

- Grow their patient base
- Strengthen reputation through excellent care for their patients
- Building lasting relationships with Primary Care Physicians

BEHAVIORS

- Refers to sub-specialist for complex cases
- Manages more common issues and screenings

NEEDS

- Ability to identify your experts
- Knowledge of technique/technology available
- Have the patient referred back for specialist-level care when possible (such as common surgeries)

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Camera

In healthcare, we often organize treatment processes around our organizational needs rather than the patient. In addition, we demonstrate several quality cues as patients sit in various areas, waiting for their next clinical interaction.

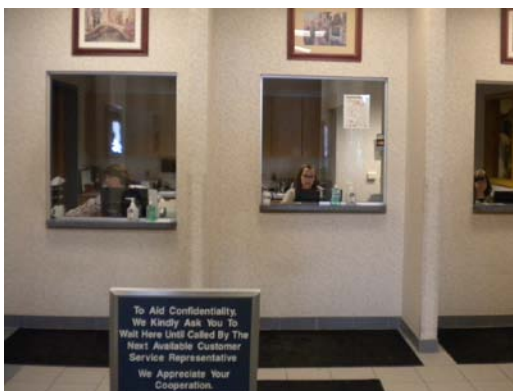
To develop a deeper sense of empathy, try this: Sit in all the chairs you require a patient to sit in and take a snapshot. What you will find is that you are likely requiring patients to sit in a large number of seats prior to the completion of the encounter. In addition, you will see, from their perspective, what cues you are signaling regarding the quality of your service.

Remember, patients don't always have the background to evaluate clinical quality, so they use service quality as a proxy. Therefore, in addition to how you deliver such, it is important to consider the environment in which care is provided.

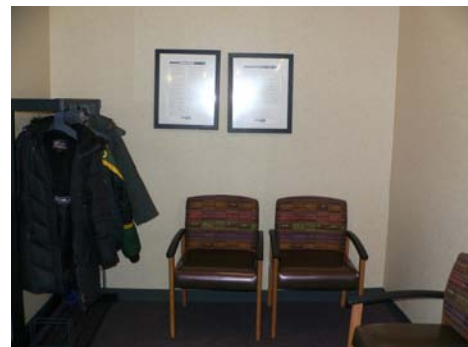
Professional, but is there enough privacy?



Patient privacy respected



Little room for wheelchairs



More space for special needs



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Huddles

Take out dedicated time to include all members of the care team – physicians, nurses, administrative support and talk about the patient experience. These interactions could be only 10 minutes.

Make sure that such is routine and puts all on the same level. Participants should share their views, new feedback or innovative solutions. Leadership of the meeting can rotate through a number of people to share the responsibility and distribute the commitment across the entire team.

Ideally, these would happen weekly, as patient experience management is an on-going concern. Some discussion topics to get you started:

- Showcase individuals who've demonstrated expected behaviors
- Scheduling / Access
- Physical environment (e.g., waiting areas, exam rooms)
- Review patient satisfaction scores
- New organization-wide experience initiatives and their impact on your unit



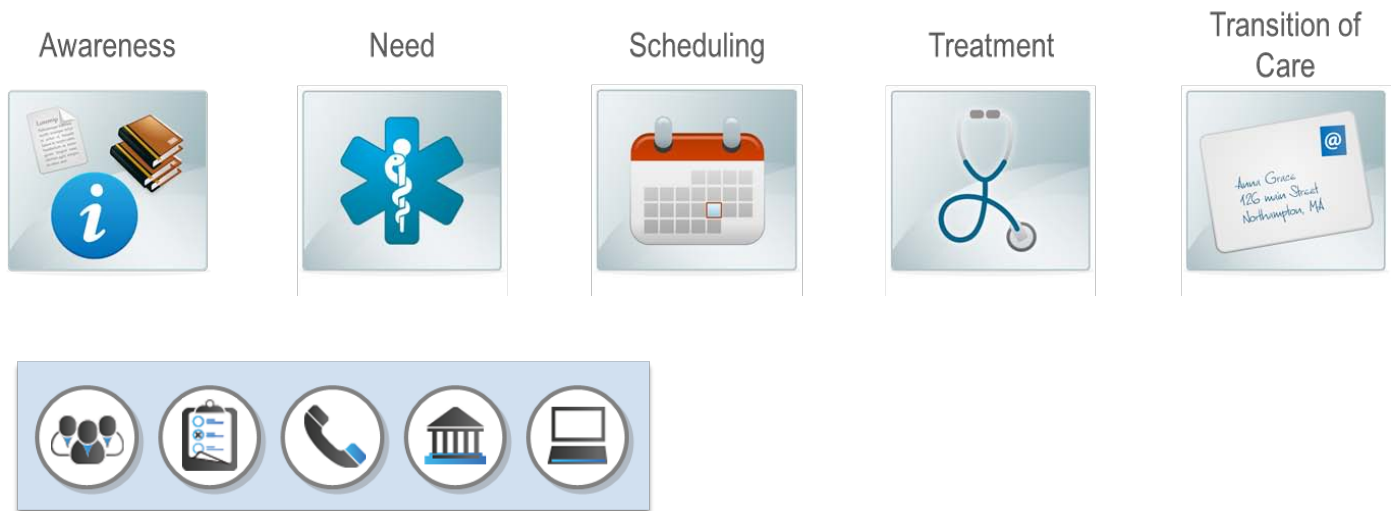
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Experience Map

The experience map organized all of the activities in the patient experience to create a holistic view. By seeing the journey in one continuum, individuals can appreciate their respective role and how it might impact the next step. Ideally, patients would help you to design such, but staff can provide insight into their respective areas.

Be sure to include items from the patient perspective – not your process. This orientation is critical to viewing the journey with the highest levels of empathy. As a stretch goal, document the forms of interactions (e.g., types of touchpoints) and respective stewards.

Finally, it is often helpful to retell the key points of the patient story (the ideal state) using the experience map. Define the ideal outcome or the lasting impression with patients and families at each step.



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Dashboard Posters

Having success measures and performance results in a highly visible place reinforces the importance of the patient experience. In addition, it provides an opportunity to celebrate successes and emphasize opportunities for improvement.

These posters can easily be created using stapled document protectors and print outs from standard 8 ½ X 11" reports. Alternatively, you can create a dashboard in a digital environment.

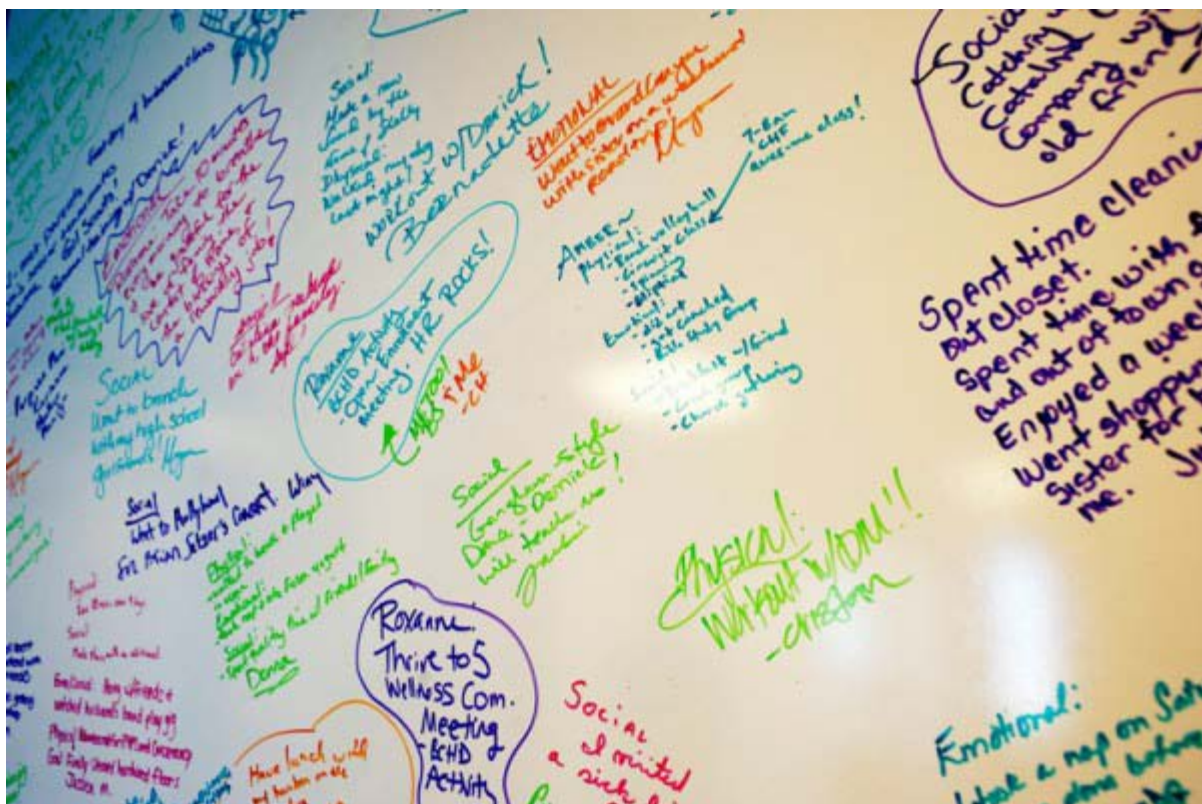


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Comment Wall

Have a spare dry erase board? Some extra wall space? Posting both patient/family and staff comments can have a very strong positive effect. Comments of praise are very helpful to reinforce your expected behaviors and provide an alternative channel for communications.

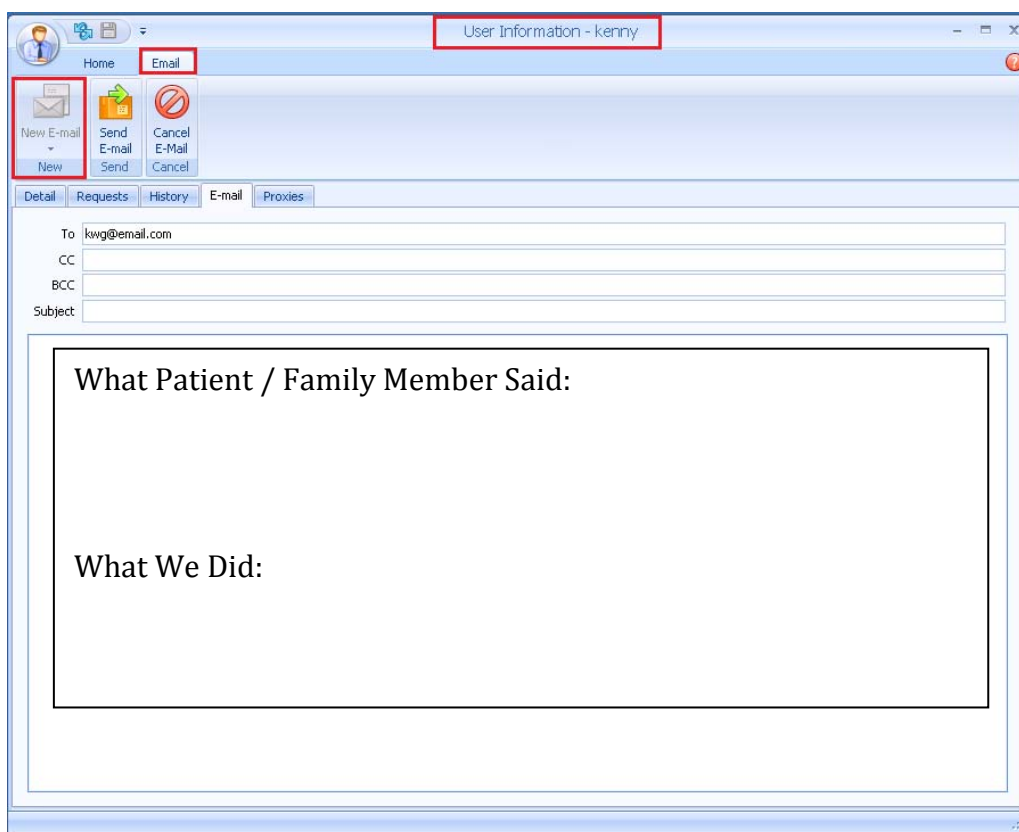
Normally, such should be presented in a staff meeting room, not a public space, unless you want patients to write directly onto the board.



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Email

Take time to compose and send an email around to the entire team, including a patient comment (or paraphrased version). This demonstrates leadership commitment to an exceptional patient experience and provides another opportunity for praise. This praise, when widely distributed, shows that the team holds each other accountable for success.



The screenshot shows an email composition interface. At the top, the window title is "User Information - kenny". Below the title bar, there are tabs for "Home" and "Email", with "Email" being the active tab. On the left side, there is a sidebar with icons for "New E-mail" (with a dropdown arrow), "Send E-mail", and "Cancel E-mail". The "New E-mail" icon is highlighted with a red box. Below the sidebar, there are tabs for "Detail", "Requests", "History", "E-mail", and "Proxies", with "E-mail" being the active tab. The main area of the window contains a form for composing an email. The "To" field is filled with "kwg@email.com". Below the "To" field are fields for "CC", "BCC", and "Subject". The body of the email is a large text area with a black border. It contains two sections: "What Patient / Family Member Said:" and "What We Did:", both followed by empty space for text entry.

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Volunteer

In the healthcare environment, we have a unique opportunity to interact with patients and families in different ways than other service industries. You can take advantage of this uniqueness by spending as much time as available being a front line volunteer. Doing so, whether it's providing information or supporting inpatients, will connect you more strongly to patients, see how other departments function, and reconnect you to the reason why you enjoy working in the industry.

Note: This is different from executive rounding. While valuable, executive rounding still puts you in a position of authority, and, therefore, patients might not share all of their concerns. In addition, staff members will behave somewhat differently around you.

Conclusion

Managing the patient experience will continue to be a top priority for healthcare organizations and their leaders. Resource constraints shouldn't inhibit your ability to develop empathy. With these inexpensive tools, empathy can be strengthened and expected behaviors reinforced.

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About Endeavor

Endeavor Management, is an international management consulting firm that collaboratively works with their clients to achieve greater value from their transformational business initiatives. Endeavor serves as a catalyst by providing pragmatic methodologies and industry expertise in Transformational Strategies, Operational Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, and Transformational Leadership.

Our clients include those responsible for:

- Business Strategy
- Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Operations
- Technology Deployment
- Strategic Human Capital
- Corporate Finance

The firm's 40 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, deep operational insight and broad industry experience. This experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets. Endeavor's clients span the globe and are typically leaders in their industry.

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