

Realising the Potential of the Patient Journey

Pharmaceutical companies are striving to embed the patient across their activities, and with this has come a rise in patient centric marketing planning. Patient journey work has immense potential to support these planning processes, however, it is currently underutilised.

A framework for marketing planning

Patient journey can be interpreted in different ways. For some, the patient journey is a robust depiction of the patient flow; for others, it represents deep insight into the emotional highs and lows patients can experience throughout the course of their disease.

In our experience, a patient journey is most useful when it provides a framework for marketing planning. An effective journey should bring together patient-centred understanding of the market and commercial implications within a single, simple model.

A holistic understanding

Whilst the patient journey places the patient at its heart, it should integrate different lenses and perspectives, to create a three-dimensional view.

Critical to building a complete picture is interweaving the perspectives of various stakeholders, and capturing their emotions, attitudes and behaviours at each step. It can be beneficial to incorporate both qualitative understanding and quantitative metrics to demonstrate the nature and extent of these aspects.

This integrated understanding builds a cohesive vision of the market place and allows marketers to account for different stakeholders within their strategy and associated tactics.



Clear and useful

A 360° approach can generate a mass of content and information. This can be difficult to navigate and digest.

The first step is to determine a framework that can be used to structure the patient journey in a way that makes sense for the brand and/or company. A simple 'origination', 'diagnosis', 'treatment', 'ongoing management' model can be a good starting point, but it needs to be adapted and made relevant for the specific condition and brand in question. For example, in relapsing-remitting diseases, capturing the shape of the journey in terms of relapses or flare ups and periods of remission is key to the patient experience and drives management and treatment strategies.

From there a range of outputs designed to represent this information can be developed to suit diverse needs within pharmaceutical organisations.

An encyclopaedic knowledge of the patient journey can be conveyed using online and interactive tools. This format is visually appealing and user-friendly enabling users to access specific content areas of interest, to the required level of detail.

Alternatively, quick reference points can be developed in the form of one pagers or books that sit on the desks of pharmaceutical stakeholders.

Commercial application

It is important that patient journey work delivers more than a structured repository of information.

It should highlight the opportunities and challenges for the brand and/or company, and guide strategy and tactical development.

The patient journey framework can be used to identify:

1 Where to play?

Highlighting the opportunities that can deliver relevant growth. For example, where in the journey should we focus our efforts to the benefit of our brand or our company? Is it pertinent to prioritise driving diagnosis, or increasing uptake within the first line setting? Should the focus be on a specific segment of patients, or health care professionals?

2 How to win?

Understanding how to leverage prioritised opportunities. For example, what are the strategic imperatives? And, how can we go about achieving them? What tactical initiatives should we employ? Should we use patient support initiatives? HCP communications? Develop conversation tools?



Optimising value

Oftentimes, companies already know a lot about different stakeholders' experiences across a given patient journey. As such, it's important to build from this basis of existing knowledge. It may be the case that further primary research is not needed, and synthesis is more appropriate. Or, it could be that further work is required to fill gaps in understanding. Regardless, creating a patient journey framework enables integrated understanding of the market and provides a comprehensive basis from which to identify opportunities and challenges for pharmaceutical companies and brands.

Companies can get the most return on investment from this exercise if undertaken at the beginning of the brand life cycle, at the addition or launch of a new indication, or to coincide with and inform brand planning processes. Strategies and tactics that closely align with prioritised opportunities along the journey will offer the greatest potential for differentiation, impact, and brand success.

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