



Understanding the implications of ineffective patient engagement during home infusion therapy

Executive summary

Home infusion therapy is a highly complex healthcare setting with many moving parts and multiple care team members, including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, intake specialists, and more, trying to work in a highly coordinated fashion to ensure patients get the treatment they need when they need it.

For patients, home infusion treatment can be confusing and stressful at times since it often involves equipment and medication administration that they are not accustomed to. Having instant access to care team members and pharmacy experts while under the care of a home infusion pharmacy is a critical part of overall patient satisfaction, patient safety, and continuous therapy adherence.

During the pandemic, more patients and physicians gravitated to the home setting for drug administration, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of patients receiving home infusion therapy treatment.

In an independent research study conducted by In90group Research of more than 100 patients who are currently or have been under the care of a home infusion pharmacy in the past 18 months, respondents were asked about the communication mechanisms and practices their home infusion pharmacy used while receiving treatments.



The research reveals that many home infusion providers do not have sufficient remote patient engagement systems and capabilities in place.

47%

said they didn't have the correct amount of medications and supplies on hand either often or sometimes

56%

were less than fully satisfied with the communication methods used by their home infusion provider

35%

said on average, it took more than one day to get a response to their question

Our goal with this summary is to help home infusion pharmacy leaders better understand the importance of having the right systems in place that facilitate rapid response to patient needs and ultimately help improve patient satisfaction, reduce adverse events, and grow their business.

With more health plans transitioning from in-patient infusion treatment centers to in-home infusion programs, the need for home infusion pharmacies to get patient engagement right has never been more urgent.

Current state of patient satisfaction

Timely access to pharmacy care professionals is at the core of patient satisfaction. According to survey respondents, home infusion pharmacies have much room for improvement in four key metrics that are most influenced by communication capabilities.

58%	of patients were less than fully satisfied with their pharmacy's general communication regarding medication and supplies
57%	less than fully satisfied with timely response to urgent clinical or equipment issues
55%	less than fully satisfied with the coordination of nursing visits
60%	less than fully satisfied with their ability to access training and education materials to help maintain therapy



In addition to these less-than-favorable satisfaction scores, poor communication capabilities also have significant cost implications for home infusion pharmacies.

Equipment/supplies optimization

With rising costs and supply chain challenges, wasting medication doses and supplies is not an option. Understanding what patients have on hand and ensuring the proper amounts are available and ready when the nurse arrives to administer the infusion is critical.

47%

of patients said that they did not have the right amount of medications and supplies either often or sometimes.

Response times

When patients' urgent questions don't get answered in a timely manner, their satisfaction decreases.

68%

of respondents said it either often or sometimes took multiple attempts to get an answer to a question they had about their infusion or IV line

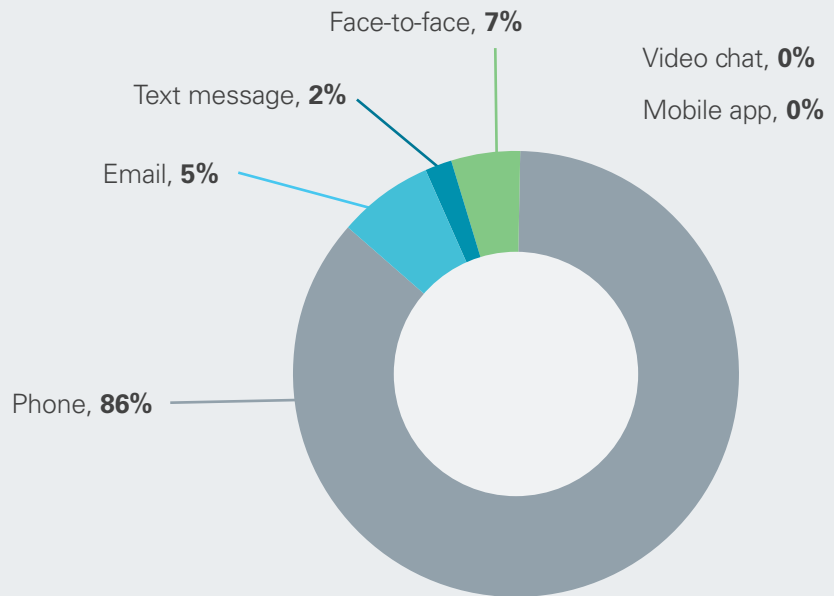
35%

of respondents said it took one or more days to get a response to their question

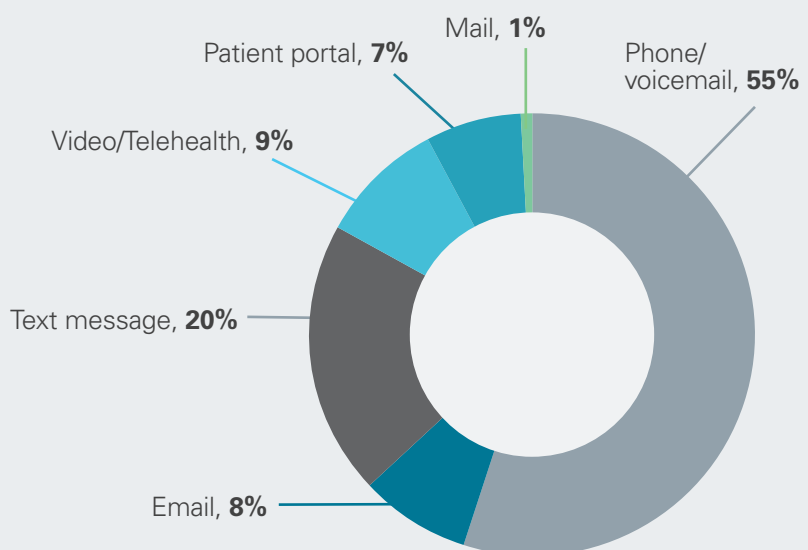
Discovering the root of the problem

Unfortunately, many home infusion pharmacies are still dependent on outdated communication mechanisms that limit their ability to engage with patients and non-medical care team members in real time, according to a February 2023 study of 100 home medical equipment providers and home infusion pharmacies. In fact, 86% of providers said they use the phone as the primary mechanism to communicate with patients.

Primary communication mechanisms used to communicate with patients



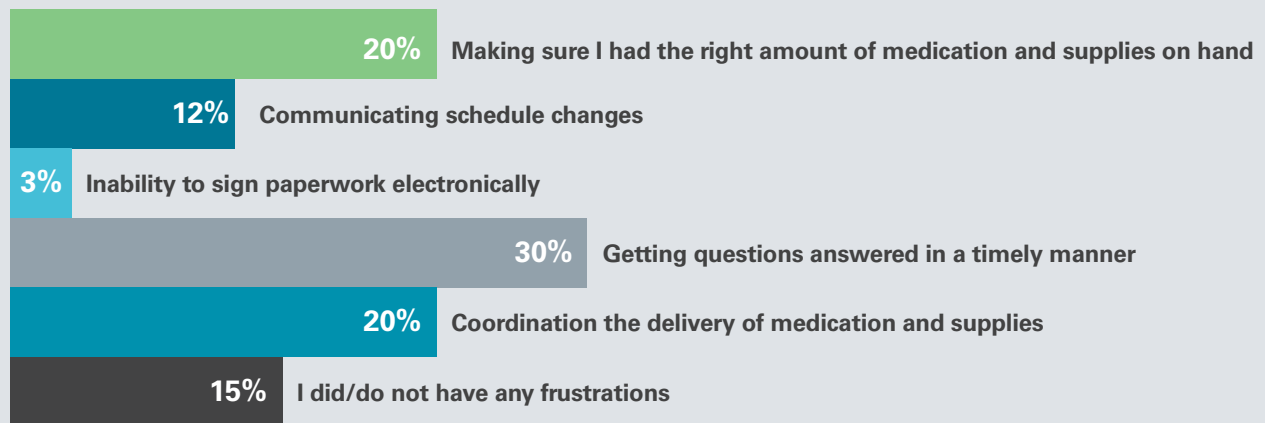
Patients echoed this statistic, reporting that the phone was the primary communications vehicle, with text and telehealth coming in a distance next.



Unfortunately, with phone calls as the primary communication mechanism, the likelihood of connecting on the first try with another person is low. This results in voicemails and phone tag that not only waste time, but also delay patients getting the answers they need. Call centers are often used to catch call-backs from patients, but these people are typically not familiar with the patient or their treatment plan and simply add a step to an already complex process. In the end, both patients and providers are frustrated.

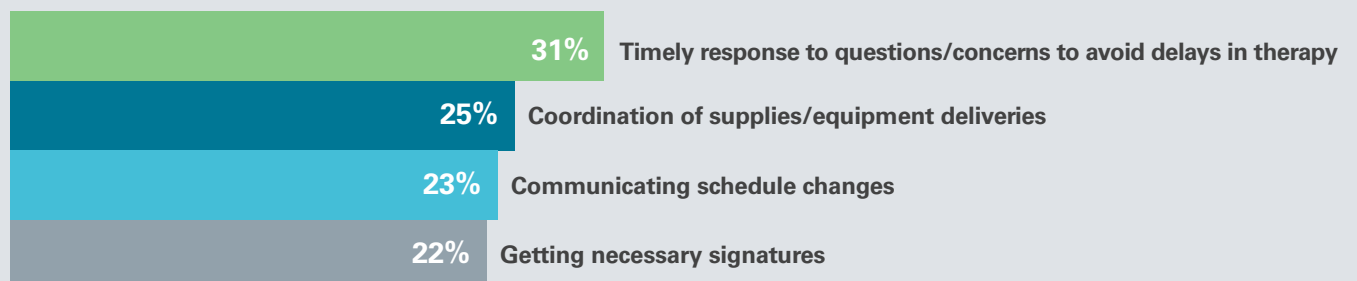
Patient frustrations: Today's healthcare consumers are much more tech-savvy than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, where virtual care became more of the norm. Plus, patients' expectations of anytime, anywhere access has risen with the advent of ecommerce giants like Amazon and Netflix, resulting in higher demands for more real-time communication channels in their healthcare partners.

Top patient frustrations



Pharmacy frustrations: When referring to the pharmacy/provider survey, we see that pharmacy leaders share similar frustrations as patients but have the added operational challenges.

Top home infusion pharmacy frustrations with remote patient communications



The biggest benefit we see with using CitusHealth messaging in the intake process is that it doesn't create multiple threads for patients. With email, changing the header creates a new email thread, and then people start responding on the wrong thread and it gets very confusing. But in CitusHealth, you can see all the history — everything that's been discussed with the patient — in a single place. That's a beautiful thing for us.

Melissa K., Specialty Care Patient Admissions Supervisor, PromptCare

Understanding the impact

The implications of ineffective patient engagement capabilities can be felt across the organization. According to 98% of survey respondents, their pharmacy's method of communication plays/played a role in their level of satisfaction (59% significant role + 39% limited role).

39%
Limited role

2%
No role

59%
Significant role

Real-time, digital communication is the new norm, with 96% of respondents saying that being able to communicate in real time through mobile phone, tablet, or computer was important (64% said very important and 32% said somewhat important).

Operational challenges arise for pharmacies that are unable to meet this new standard of patient engagement, including suboptimal staff productivity, as team members struggle through missed phone calls and delayed messages about schedule changes, missing medications/supplies, and changes in the patient's treatment plan. With the ability to hire and retain qualified staff as the number one concern for 60% of survey respondents, now is the time pharmacies want to equip their team members with everything they need to be productive and happy.



We were able to create forms through CitusHealth that were personalized to us. Our intake process used to be very paper heavy — with huge folders that we would fill with 10 different pamphlets. We now send intake paperwork to patients before they're ever even seen. We don't even scan our incoming orders anymore. Instead, we capture them through CitusHealth, which matches it directly to the patient in the EHR — streamlining the whole process.

Tanya Golovanoff, PharmD, BCSCP, Director of Poudre Infusion Therapy LLC



Ineffective patient engagement and communication can also stunt a pharmacy's growth potential, especially among referral sources who are actively participating in value-based payment models where cost and outcomes directly impact reimbursement percentages.

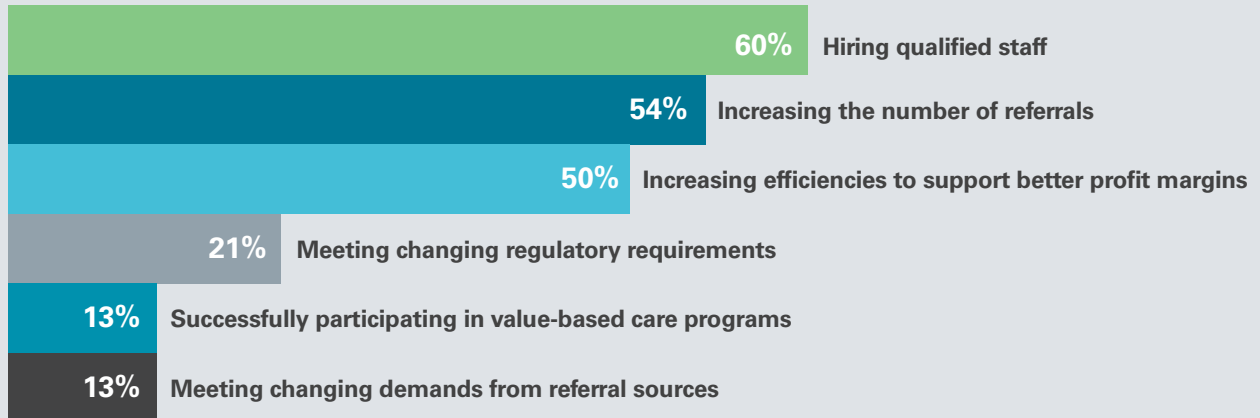
According to a recent In90group Research study of 100 referring physicians who refer to post-acute or home-based care, 96% of post-acute care referring entities said they were likely to send more referrals to providers that had demonstrated strong patient engagement capabilities.

96% of referring entities say they are likely to send more referrals to providers with strong patient engagement capabilities.

With the right engagement platform in place, home infusion pharmacies are more likely to get asked (and earn the right) to participate in narrowing care networks among physicians, health systems, and even payors because they are better equipped to avoid adverse events and manage their patients' care. And as patient and family member satisfaction grows, so does the pharmacy's reputation within the community, which can lead to more community referrals.

Home infusion pharmacy top challenges for 2023

Other than supply chain challenges, what do you consider to be your organization's top business challenges in 2023? (select up to 3)



Give them what they want

When asked what home infusion consumers like/liked most about their home infusion pharmacy provider, patients indicated that the use of technology and ease of doing business matter most.

Top patient preferences

40%

The use of technology to fit my lifestyle

36%

Ease of doing business

19%

Personalization of services

We found it interesting that the percentage of consumers who appreciate the ease by which their home infusion pharmacy works with them was almost double those who care most about personalized services. This further demonstrates the importance of having the right patient engagement systems in place.

Making the move to modern digital engagement solutions like CitusHealth can help ensure that home infusion pharmacies are able to meet the growing expectations of today's home infusion patients. Plus, pharmacies can discover new operational efficiencies that help improve profitability.

For example, with CitusHealth, pharmacies can capture electronic signatures from patients, family members, and other care team members through its app-less solution. This not only reduces the time to start of care, but also helps to eliminate the "signature chase" when it comes to updating therapy plans and medications.



With CitusHealth, all signatures are instant when the nurses do their notes. When they get signatures in quicker, the things we need for billing are in quicker. Charting is great, signatures from agencies are instant, and we're not waiting on them to categorize and invoice.

Lia M, Project Manager, Nurse Manager, Team Lead, PromptCare

Pharmacies using CitusHealth can also leverage custom smart forms that capture necessary data and automatically kick off next-step workstreams, limiting any delays in response times or patient care. Patient education materials can be pushed directly to patients' mobile devices or computers to help ease patient fears and encourage self-support. When patients submit questions to care team members at the pharmacy, auto-escalation features ensure that patients receive a response in a timely manner.

To learn more about how the right remote patient support and engagement solution can help home infusion pharmacies respond to patient needs in a more timely and complete way while also improving patient satisfaction, reducing adverse events, and growing their business, visit www.citushealth.com.

About In90group Research

In90group Research is an independent research firm dedicated to helping organizations and industry leaders gain better insights into market trends so they can make more informed decisions, work more effectively to solve big challenges, and improve the lives of the businesses and consumers who need their services. To learn more about In90group Research, visit in90group.com or email info@in90group.com.

About CitusHealth

Through digital tools and app-less collaboration, CitusHealth is transforming the way thousands of care teams communicate with each other, with patients and their families, and with referral partners — allowing organizations to experience higher staff retention, delivering higher-quality care to those they serve, and restoring efficiency and work-life balance to clinical roles.