

With the right payment partner, great patient experiences continue long after hospital discharges

Whether it's a standard checkup with a GP, a major medical procedure, or getting bloodwork done, there are a few things that most of us expect to be standard parts of any great patient experience. The appointment booking process, for example, should be simple and easy to use, the practice or hospital itself should be clean and operate efficiently; and the healthcare professionals should have a helpful bedside manner.

By [Joel Bronkowski](#) 13 Sep 2023



Source: Twitter @paystack

But patient experiences don't only include the steps leading up to and during treatment. They extend beyond treatment and discharge. That might include some obvious things like follow-up care and patient feedback. But it also includes things less typically associated with healthcare, such as data security and billing.

But given the cost of healthcare, particularly in the private sector, it's vital that healthcare providers pay attention to those less obvious things. If they don't, patients will look elsewhere for their healthcare needs. If, on the other hand, they do get those things right, along with the aforementioned basics, they'll have patients who will come back to them for other medical needs and who will recommend their services to friends and family.

The importance of payments and data security

Before looking at how organisations in the healthcare sector can ensure they're providing the best possible experience when it comes to payments and data security, it's worth digging a little deeper into why they're so important.

Let's take data security, for example. Patient confidentiality is a critical component of healthcare. Outside of not wanting the whole world to know what affliction they might have, many patients also need that confidentiality to stay safe and healthy (some women would struggle to obtain birth control without it, for instance).

So while a data breach might cost a healthcare organisation large sums of money (the average cost of a breach in South Africa is now close to R50m) in both regulatory fines and lost operational time, it could also cost them large numbers of lost patients due to the loss of trust. And with healthcare sector cyberattacks on the rise, it's more important than ever that providers ensure that every aspect of their operations is as secure as possible.

That includes payments. While gaining access to a healthcare provider's payment records can't tell bad actors everything they want to know about the provider's patients, they might gather enough personal data to impersonate and defraud those

patients elsewhere. That's also more than enough to cause patients to worry and consider moving to another provider.



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But that feeling of trust and security when making a payment has to be matched by a delightful overall payment experience. Remember, in the private healthcare sector especially, people are often asked to spend large amounts of money (even if their medical aid or health insurer reimburses them afterwards). The last thing they want is to encounter any difficulties in making those payments.

In fact, a 2021 US study found that nearly two-thirds of patients would switch healthcare providers for a better payment experience. That shows just how vital payments are to the overall patient experience and how important it is that healthcare providers get payments right.

Finding the right ally

But how should healthcare providers go about ensuring that their payments are secure and providing the best possible experiences for patients?

A good place to start is by partnering with a payment provider that puts those things at the heart of its solutions. From a safety and security perspective, you want a provider that has the highest possible levels of security certification for each of the payment methods you offer.

It should additionally be able to demonstrate that, when someone inputs their card details, the information is encrypted and stored securely. That means that, even if the payment provider falls victim to a breach, none of that data will be accessible.

From an experiential perspective, the payment provider should enable prompt, detailed, and personalised invoicing. This promptness ensures that patients aren't left stressing about how much they have to pay, while a detailed breakdown helps them understand why they're paying what they are. Personalisation, meanwhile, can help ensure that they still feel like individual patients rather than an account number.

Equally important for a good payment experience is enabling seamless payments across the broadest possible range of payment methods. Customers have a wide variety of payment options, including card payments, EFT, SnapScan, and more. It's critical that the payment partner has a strong understanding of the payment methods that are most popular in each region, and has the ability to process across said channels.

Great experiences are vital in a growing market

In South Africa, the healthcare market is currently worth \$198.60m and is expected to grow to \$340.40m by 2027. With that growth, however, comes increased competition as more and more players eye up the available opportunities. In order to benefit from that growth, it's therefore critical that healthcare players provide the best patient experiences possible.

While all the traditional parts of that experience are still incredibly important, really standing out means focusing on the less visible parts like security and payments. A good payment partner with a strong, relevant track record can prove critical in achieving those outcomes and providing the best patient experience possible.

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