

TeleHealth Services Patient Engagement and Education Blog
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An Educator's Education

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Video education tools can really play a key role in helping patients understand their condition better, gain new insights into their own recovery strategy, and also give them the tools they need to get more engaged in their own care. Even with all this information in hand, seeing the true value isn't always as clear as you would like to think. A perfect example came about during a recent on-site training session that I had just completed with a team of nurses.



My focus was on showing them how to assign video education for their patients to view, queue up videos during rounding sessions, and then track education completion throughout their hospital stay. These simple steps would enable them to spend more time engaging with each patient and creating a more personalized approach to addressing each patient's individual situation.

When we were done, one of the nurses crossed her arms and exhaled loudly. "Sure, it will help as far as compliance, so that's nice. But honestly... it's a four-minute video. Do you really think this can help keep patients from falling? How big of a difference can a video make?"

"I'm glad you asked." My smile broadened. "Speaking from my own experiences as a surgical patient, I can tell you that video education made all the difference in the world."

I could see in her eyes that she was still skeptical, but she gave me her attention nonetheless.

"Okay. I'm listening."

Without thinking, I reached up and rested my hand on my shoulder as I began my story.

It happened in a split second. I was on my third set of flat bench presses when I felt a faint pulling sensation in my right arm. Then, without warning, my shoulder gave out on me. No sharp pain, no sensation of tearing, no obvious feeling of an injury. Just a total loss of control. My right arm could no longer hold up the weights! Thank goodness I had a spotter to catch them before they fell on me in what would have been a life-threatening injury.

I found myself at the doctor's office a short while later, fully expecting to leave with a simple diagnosis of muscle strain. I hoped the treatment plan would be just as simple. Medication, perhaps a steroid shot, heat, ice, rest... a few weeks of babying my shoulder and I was certain I'd be back on the bench in no time.

Unfortunately, the verdict was a torn rotator cuff. I was stunned by the news. For someone like me, physically active my entire life but also careful to prevent injuries, a torn rotator cuff seemed unfair – and just plain ironic.

After the initial shock of my diagnosis passed, a conversation with my doctor helped me shift my focus to recovering from the injury. There were a few different treatment options to consider, including surgery, but all required a prompt decision.

Fortunately, my doctor pointed me to a series of patient education videos on my injury and treatment choices. The videos walked me through all of the pre-surgery diagnostic tests I would undergo, gave me a solid understanding of the procedure I ultimately decided upon (arthroscopic surgery), and covered potential risk factors I needed to consider. The education also explored the recovery period and helped me think about preparing for life after surgery.

One by one, the videos opened my eyes as to what I was in for and helped me set realistic expectations. I had a better idea of how my pain would be managed, what would be involved in physical therapy, and the overall timeline for getting back to doing the things I love. I took comfort in the words of the experienced physicians narrating the videos, as well as in the testimonials of patients who had already been on this journey. Their stories and their smiles helped me feel confident that a better quality of life was just on the other side of surgery and recovery. I watched each of them, sometimes multiple times, to soak up all the information – and the subtle reassurances that I could handle what was ahead of me. *I was going to be okay.*

My surgery came and went in the blink of an eye. I'm happy to report that all went smoothly and I started therapy right on schedule. During one of the sessions, I overheard a conversation that stuck with me. Just on the other side of the curtain

between our treatment tables, a fellow patient and his therapist were discussing his recovery. The patient had undergone a similar procedure 13 weeks before mine.

“How are things coming along with your recovery?” the therapist asked.

“Okay... I guess,” said the patient. “I’ve still got a lot of stiffness in my shoulder and my range of motion is pretty limited.”

“Have you been doing the stretching and strength building exercises at home?”

“On and off. I can’t always remember how to do the exercises. I do them as best I can on some days and skip others.”

“Are you using the videos to help you get through the exercises?”

An awkward silence filled the space on the other side of the curtain and I felt a pang of sympathy for the patient. Having experienced all the same pain and limitations he was describing, I wouldn’t have wished it on anyone. I also knew how overwhelming a surgery and hospitalization could be, and understood how easy it could be to forget important details. Still, I recognized that we’d been given the same educational resources. We just had different levels of commitment to the recovery process.

Having watched the series of videos, I already knew the exercise techniques like the back of my hand. I also knew that I had to do them every single day, or else my recovery would be compromised. I had a reasonable expectation for how long it would take me to recover if I did the exercises every day, and seeing that light at the end of the tunnel helped me maintain a positive attitude throughout my recovery.

Having all of that information was a big part of what helped me make the commitment. But more important, having it in video format – with images, sounds and narration – gave my brain multiple ways to digest the details and make sense of them. Being able to replay those videos as often as I needed helped me ingrain the key lessons and store them in my memory. Seeing the expert work of orthopedic specialists and hearing the voices of people who’d been in my shoes helped me build the confidence that I needed to make a full recovery. Which I did.

“Good as new,” I assured the nurse, patting my right shoulder.

Her expression had softened at the end of my story. “You’ve given me lots to think about,” she said. “I’m glad. I think I’m going to put it to the test and start using more videos with my patients.”

As an Outcomes Manager for hospitals with interactive patient engagement systems – as well as a former surgical patient – I share this story often. Education is an essential part of the care you provide, and in my case, it made all the difference. Video is one of the most powerful modalities you can use to inform and engage your patients. But don’t just take my word for it! There are plenty of recent success stories from hospitals across the country who are using video to improve patient outcomes and I’d be happy to share some of them with you.

I invite you to connect with me and tell me about your own experiences in educating patients with video. Are you finding it helpful? Have you seen it make an impact? If not, what challenges or barriers are keeping you from using video to engage and educate your patients? Drop me a line if you’d like to chat, brainstorm, or even just vent. When you’re ready to reach out, I’ve got an ear.

And should you need it, a shoulder.

ABOUT Jim Stratos



Jim Stratos joined the TeleHealth Services Client Outcomes team in March 2017. For more than 25 years he has been a relationship manager and technology solution provider to the healthcare industry. As an ACE certified personal trainer and functional movement specialist, he has unique insights into helping clinical teams identify and address barriers to behavior change

in order to better realize their targeted outcomes. Jim’s passion is helping his clients explore creative ways to use technology to address challenges and achieve goals. He serves TeleHealth clients in NJ, NY, and PA, and the New England area in their efforts to reduce readmissions and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes. You can reach Jim or any of the other Outcomes Team members at OutcomesMgrs@TeleHealth.com.

ABOUT TeleHealth Services

TeleHealth Services is leading the charge in patient engagement, providing hospitals a full range of interactive patient care technologies. These solutions allow hospitals to easily deliver patient-specific education and facilitate the exchange of clinical and non-clinical information for a variety of needs. Patients, families, and clinicians are responding positively to these efforts to better engage patients in their own recovery. Comprehensive patient education and care plan management tools also help reduce readmissions, improve outcomes, increase workflow efficiencies and enhance overall patient satisfaction to create a better patient experience