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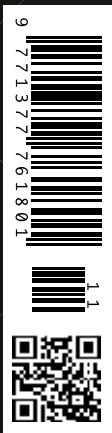
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The whole patient

I am a cancer patient. I have experience first-hand how society's view on patients deals a massive blow to your own sense of self-worth. Friends stop calling you, or they call you way too much. Healthcare professionals are too stressed out to talk to you. To top it all, you are limited to doing absolutely nothing for several months, or even years. These things combined, together with the obvious physical challenges of going through cancer, make it easy to understand why many cancer patients suffer from depression.

While I speak from a cancer patient's perspective, I have no doubt that those facing other conditions experience similar feelings of alienation. My own experience led me to establish WarOnCancer. This health tech company is on a mission to solve the mental health problem for everyone affected by cancer.

The fact is, the patient is becoming more and more central to and engaged in their own healthcare. Where I see patient engagement contributing most is to mental healthcare. Listening to patient's needs and preferences is a great first step towards making patients feel more human. I believe that self-worth, to feel like a strong human being, is a key desire for most patients and something that is overlooked in the debate on mental health today.

One of the biggest challenges to effective patient engagement is the lack of digitalisation within the healthcare sector as well as information overload. Physicians today are stretched to their limits with regards to administration, data processing and research development. The reality is that it is very hard for physicians to process all that extra layer of "engagement" from patients into their work routine. Hence, investment into digital infrastructure and AI to aid the physicians is essential as a first step.

We also need to take a good, hard look at patient reported outcome measures (PROMs). Research points to that collecting PROMs leads to better care delivery as well as increased mental health for the patients. To accelerate the adaption-process, we should implement a system where PROMs data is used to compare and reward hospital performance within a pay-for-performance scheme.

Will a holistic understanding of the 'whole patient' lead to better clinical outcomes and more positive patient experiences? A whole patient understanding is crucial. It is not solely about one condition; health is personal and health systems need to find a way to identify what information should be leveraged to understand a patient holistically. Such actions will lead to more efficient clinical outcomes and more positive patient experiences.

We hope the articles you find in these pages inspire you to look at patients and their contribution to better healthcare with even newer eyes and the insights from leading sector professionals offer fresh ideas on leading and managing. Happy reading! ■



Fabian Bolin

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co-founder of WarOnCancer

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