'Accuracy is the new currency': Inside 4 systems' data-driven push for better patient experiences

Healthcare is entering a new era in which patient experience is no longer a differentiator – it is a core driver of growth, loyalty, reimbursement and competitive positioning. A recent survey found that nearly half (49%) of health system C-suite leaders identified patient experience as their top strategic initiative for the next two years, up from just 14% in 2020. To meet these rising expectations, leading organizations are investing in and reimagining patient experience through the lens of personalization, seamlessness and omnichannel engagement – much of it enabled by data and AI.

Yet many organizations are falling short of their patient experience ambitions, not for lack of effort, but because they face a fundamental data challenge. Healthcare generates 30% of the world's data, but an estimated 97% of it goes unused.

Volume isn't the only issue – it's trust. Data across the healthcare ecosystem remains fragmented, incomplete and often inaccurate, diminishing confidence in the insights derived from it. And without trusted data, health systems can't deliver trusted insights or the personalized, coordinated experiences patients now expect.

To explore how organizations are overcoming these challenges, Becker's Healthcare spoke with health system executives and business leaders about what it takes to create a 360-degree view of every patient – and how enterprise-wide, trusted data is driving measurable value.

Why patient experience is now a strategic imperative

C-suite leaders view patient experience as a source of competitive differentiation that is tightly linked with clinical and business outcomes, including satisfaction measures, loyalty and retention. It also influences HCAHPS and CAHPS scores, which impact reimbursement and revenue. Historically, better patient experience has resulted in higher margins and profits that drive growth.

Improving the patient experience also fosters a better work environment, resulting in more engaged clinicians and lower turnover.

As health systems focus on improving their patient experience, common themes are personalized experiences, tailored care journeys and individualized, whole-person care.
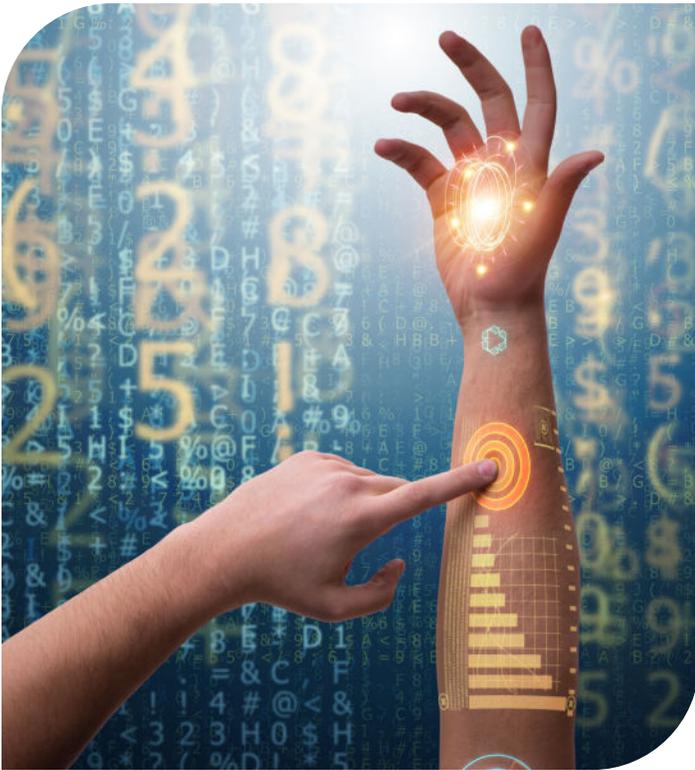
The critical prerequisite: knowing who is who

Health systems have invested heavily in patient experience initiatives, like digital front doors, scheduling and care coordination tools, and CRM systems. But these systems often rely on fragmented, incomplete and inaccurate data. Compounding the issue is the fact that the average health system uses 18 EHRs, along with various lab, imaging and IT systems, as well as point solutions and databases.

When provider records are fragmented, patients experience confusion, delayed scheduling and denied claims, which deteriorates patient satisfaction, outcomes and finances. Data fragmentation also impacts providers by creating more manual work, damaging patient trust, slowing the revenue cycle and increasing compliance risk. In fact, such inefficiencies contribute to the broader problem of administrative waste – which research estimates may account for 7.5% to 15% of all U.S. healthcare spending, amounting to roughly $285 billion o $570 billion per year.

"Patient experience isn't possible without accurate, trusted and complete data," Martin Hougaard, General Manager at Verato, said. He noted exceptional patient experiences start with knowing who is who.

Mr. Hougaard elaborated. "Patients expect health systems to know them as a whole person, not a collection of disconnected records," he said. "When you know exactly who your patient is at every touchpoint, from online scheduling to call center to a partner facility, you can deliver experiences that are delightful and genuinely helpful."

A complete patient view: Customer 360

To personalize and optimize the patient experience, providers need to move from fragmented to unified, integrated data that provides a complete 360-degree view of every patient.

A true Customer 360 delivers a complete, secure and connected view of each patient – enabling seamless engagement, personalization and outreach across the care journey. This level of insight is only possible with a strong data foundation: breaking down silos to combine clinical, financial, consumer, marketing and household data, supplementing third-party enrichment data to fill gaps, and reliably tying it all to the right individual every time. A modern, cloud-native and healthcare-specific Master Data Management (MDM) platform provides that foundation, powering every strategic initiative health systems are pursuing today – from holistic patient views and AI to growth and operational efficiency.

Identity is at the core of Customer 360

Delivering high-quality patient experience and clinical care depends on a complete, longitudinal view of each patient delivered through a robust data infrastructure, governance system and MDM platform. Yet in many health systems, the same individual may exist as multiple records across disparate systems, with incomplete profiles, duplicate entries or mismatched identities. This fragmentation erodes the integrity of patient data — and in turn, the ability to deliver personalized, connected experiences. Until health systems can establish a single, trusted identity for every patient, their experience initiatives will remain limited in impact.

"We believe every interaction starts with identity," Avi Mukherjee, Chief Product Officer at Verato, said. "It might be the identity of a patient, a physician or an organization. If you don't know exactly who your patient is, who the provider is, you can't personalize their experience."

Aaron Miri, Senior Vice President and Chief Digital and Information Officer at Baptist Health (Jacksonville, Fla.), has a deep appreciation of identity. "Identity data is the lifeblood of our ecosystem. It drives everything from clinical operations to revenue cycle to patient experience. If identity isn't right, everything else is wrong," he said. "My advice to other health systems is don't underestimate the power of identity."

Matching is the key to accurate identity

At the heart of identity is matching the right patient with the right data.

Most healthcare organizations do some type of matching today in their MDM systems. These legacy solutions often rely on deterministic matching, which can fail when basic demographic details change even slightly, such as a home address, or if there's a typo in a person's name.

Traditional matching systems — which weren't built for healthcare — treat identity as a one-time checkpoint rather than an ever-evolving relationship and can miss connections across time, systems and care settings.

Verato's identity solution takes a fundamentally different approach. It uses a patented approach to referential matching along with native enrichment and publish/subscribe architecture, which ensures that every piece of data about a person or provider is matched, verified, complete and synchronized in real time and compiled into a single, accurate patient profile.

Using Verato, a Phoenix-based health system can identify the same patient across different EHRs and Salesforce to deliver a consistent view of the patient across all touchpoints — embodying a successful Customer 360 initiative. This intelligent, connected experience drives patient loyalty, retention and better health outcomes. In addition, it is saving about $1.2 million in medical costs, while eliminating over $1 million in data clean-up expenses.

Unifying data through interoperability

The idea of pulling together fragmented data from various silos is simple, but the reality is extremely difficult — especially with various interoperability rules.

Interoperability — the ability to share and connect data across systems — is essential to achieving a true Customer 360. It ensures that the correct, relevant and complete data for every individual, including third-party enrichment data, can flow seamlessly across the enterprise to fuel personalized care and outreach. "Verato has created native, out-of-the-box connectors for EMRs, CRMs like Salesforce and data platforms like Snowflake," Mr. Mukherjee said. "Our vision is to ensure that customers can easily send data to Verato and utilize our identity resolution, data governance and identity intelligence capabilities. Once you have data, you can share that trusted identity and changes to it in real time across the ecosystem."

This means lab results can instantly integrate in the right chart and partner organizations can share accurate data without generating duplications. Baptist Health worked with Verato to eliminate manual, fax-based workflows by automatically associating the right data to the right patient.

"Integrating Verato's master data management platform allows us to modernize referrals, speed up treatment and eliminate manual verification," Mr. Miri said. "We are improving care coordination for thousands of patients a year."

Mr. Hougaard explained that once patient data is unified and interoperable, a true Customer 360 can power the "micro moments" that build trust, loyalty and exceptional experiences. These moments (greeting a patient by name, presenting complete and accurate information no matter where they seek care, or anticipating needs such as follow-up reminders or transportation before surgery) are only possible when every interaction is informed by a complete, connected view of the individual.
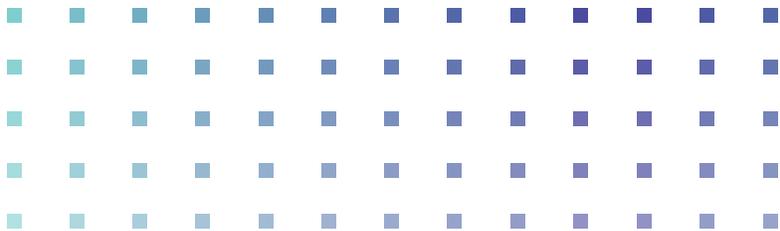
The data foundation for AI

AI systems inherit the quality of the data behind them. If an AI model is using incomplete, conflicting or inaccurate data, it will draw the wrong conclusions. "In healthcare, that's not just an efficiency problem; it's a safety and growth issue," Mr. Hougaard said.

Verato's Customer 360 approach provides health systems' AI models clean, connected—and thanks to native enrichment capabilities—complete data.

"Once the data is unified, AI can move beyond prediction to action, and health systems can trust that the data fueling their AI models truly represents each individual," Mr. Hougaard said.

Today's use of AI in healthcare is just the beginning. Mr. Mukherjee sees Verato transforming data management into data intelligence – the ability to derive meaningful insights from high-quality, connected data – and identity intelligence, which ensures every insight is tied to the correct individual. Together, these capabilities provide the foundational data needed to support current AI initiatives and emerging agentic AI that will power multiple use cases.

Identity is improving business outcomes

For years, patient identity was seen as a back-office function. According to Mr. Hougaard, leading health systems today treat identity as a strategic capability and as the foundation of their digital transformation. When executives see that identity accuracy affects growth, reimbursement and patient loyalty, they treat it as a core business capability, not a technical one.

In response, chief marketing officers, chief digital officers and strategy leaders are partnering with IT departments on Customer 360 initiatives to increase patient engagement and loyalty, as well as provider referrals. With trusted information, every downstream initiative, from marketing to analytics and AI, performs better.

Arlington-based Texas Health Resources recently used Verato to unify patient records from Epic and other disparate systems. By enriching patients' profiles with socioeconomic and lifestyle attributes, the organization was able to target consumers whose care journey had been disrupted. This resulted in more than 200,000 re-engaged patients.

Similarly, Atlantic Health System (Morristown, N.J.) saw a 31% increase in patient records within Epic that were matched to marketing records, as well as a 4% increase in health risk assessments matched to patient records. The Customer 360-powered initiative improved the system's ability to attribute clinical encounters to marketing campaigns, which improved efficiency and reduced manual work.

A solid Customer 360 foundation doesn't just deliver better data; it also unlocks faster growth and better outcomes. Verato customers typically realize ROI quickly – oftentimes, in less than four months from go-live.

"We are the invisible tool working in the back end to ensure the data is right," Mr. Mukherjee said. "Health systems that invest in trusted identity and Customer 360 capabilities will be positioned to deliver superior experiences, improve financial performance and accelerate their AI strategies."