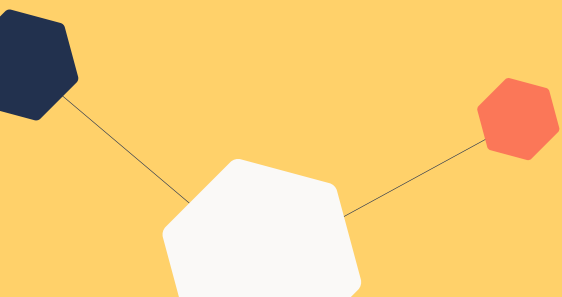# IT'S THE END

of B2B as we know it

A practical guide for health and pharma brands in 2024... and beyond!

MEDICO
DIGITAL

Contents

Power to the patients

With rapid advancements in AI and digital tools, the healthcare landscape has never moved so fast.

But one thing remains constant:

The future of healthcare belongs to brands that put patients first.

Far from the days when patients passively deferred to the judgement of their healthcare professionals, today, more than ever, patients are taking centre stage. They're more informed, empowered and connected than ever before, demanding personalised experiences and deeper relationships with the brands they trust.

This presents both an opportunity and a challenge for health and pharma brands. Most brands agree that patient-centricity is a strategic imperative, with 86% of pharma executives agreeing that patient-centricity is the best route to profitability (Deloitte, 2017).
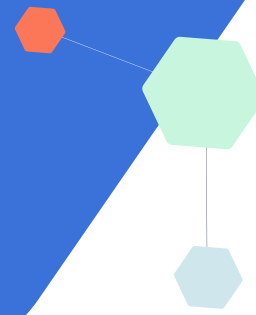
However, in practice, navigating the regulatory landscape, managing tight budgets and crafting impactful engagement strategies can feel like a daunting task.

And that's where we come in! This ebook is your practical guide to doing patient engagement well. Simple as that.

We'll equip you with practical, actionable steps to:

▶ **Unlock the power of patient engagement:** Understand the motivations, channels and preferences that drive connections with today's informed patients.

▶ **Craft winning strategies:** Learn how to deliver campaigns that drive results, build engagement across the funnel and create lasting behaviour change; all within regulatory boundaries and budget constraints.

▶ **Turn patients into partners:** Discover ways to build trust and create lasting relationships that turn patients into your biggest brand ambassadors.

Forget feeling overwhelmed. This ebook will empower you to reach patients in a way that is effective, ethical and achievable.

Footnote:
Regulatory frameworks differ widely across markets. While this ebook dives deep into the UK landscape, we frequently work with clients on multi-market campaigns, adapting our approach to meet local requirements.

Compliance 101: ethical, appropriate patient-focused marketing

When considering their direct-to-consumer (D2C) and patient-centric approaches, many health and pharma brands struggle to know what they can and can't do.

To avoid falling foul of the requirements, many brands shy away from a D2C approach altogether, missing out on the significant benefits of patient-centric marketing.

However, there's plenty that health and pharma brands can do to directly engage patients in a way that's effective, ethical and compliant.

Here's our whistle-stop tour of where to prioritise your efforts, depending on your type of organisation.

Getting it right in pharma

As any pharmaceutical company will know, prescription-only medications (POM) can't be advertised directly to patients and members of the public; as per regulations from governing bodies including the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Association (MHRA) and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI).

> **'The Regulations prohibit the issue of any advertisement wholly or mainly directed to the general public which is likely to lead to the use of a prescription-only medicine (POM).**
> (MHRA Blue Guide, 5.2)

While it's easy to focus on the things that pharma brands *can't* do concerning patients, there are several key things that they *can* do, which can generate significant results:

▸ **Unbranded disease awareness campaigns**

▸ **Product reference materials**

▸ **Gated content for those who have been prescribed, including patient support programmes**

▸ **HCP materials, including education, training and practical tools**

Unbranded educational and disease awareness campaigns

Without a doubt, pharma brands have a role to play in educating patients and the public; an element which is reflected - and in fact encouraged - in the regulations.

These educational campaigns - typically aimed at increasing public awareness of the prevalence, impact or lived experience of a disease or condition - are typically referred to as **'Disease Awareness Campaigns'** (DAC).

> **'Campaigns relating to human health directed at the general public with a view to providing information, promoting awareness or educating the public about a particular condition or disease are encouraged.'**
> (MHRA Blue Guide, 7.4)

The MHRA highlights the importance of ensuring a DAC does not fall into the domain of an advertisement. Therefore, it should avoid elements such as product claims, brand names or content which appears to direct the audience toward a particular or narrow range of treatments (i.e. promoting a medication in all but name).

It's important that raising awareness is at the forefront of the campaign. You cannot promote medicines or products as the primary purpose of the campaign is education – not selling. You want to ensure the information you provide in your DAC is medically accurate. Everything needs to be evidence-based so the patient is never misinformed or misled.

All the information in your DAC needs to be unbiased. This goes hand in hand with the prohibition of promoting products or medicines, as patients should finish reading your DAC and feel empowered and knowledgeable – not worried they need to buy something.

To avoid these pitfalls, brands often choose to create a campaign which looks and feels quite different from their product-related branding. It's also housed on a separate website or platform from their prescription-only medicine content.
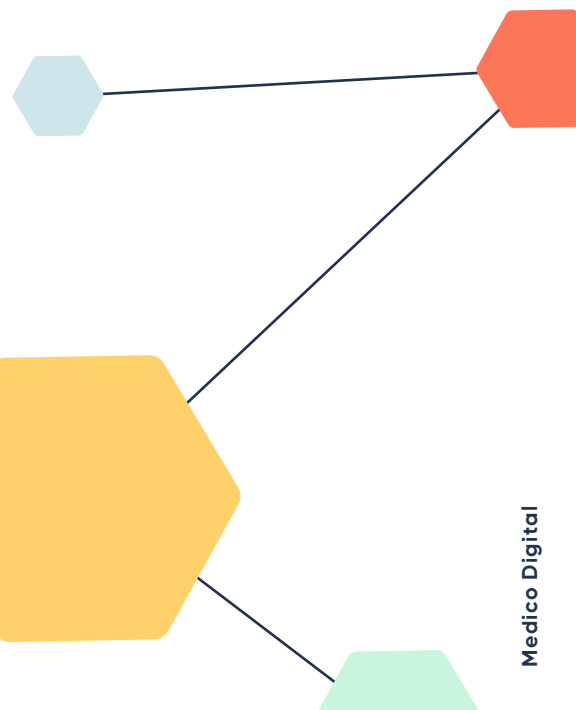
Non-promotional information for patients and the public (product reference material)

Of course, it's no surprise that many patients are aware of prescription-only treatments licensed to treat their condition.

The MHRA recognises that it is appropriate for patients and the public to access initial information about a treatment or medicine and for them to make an informed choice.

Most importantly, this information should be factual, informative and non-promotional in nature.

They outline that:

'Companies may include the following information in a website aimed at the public: disease-related information in accordance with the guidance provided in Section 7.4 above, patient information leaflets (PILs), SPCs and public assessment reports (PARs) for their POM products other non-promotional reference information about the product that fairly reflects the current body of evidence about the product and its benefit risk profile.'
(MHRA Blue Guide 7.5)

SPC - Summary of Product Characteristics

While it may not be considered part of a brand's active engagement strategy, it's important to recognise the role of this information in the patient ecosystem and ensure that the relevant PILs, SPCs and more are readily available in a clear, accessible and compliant format.
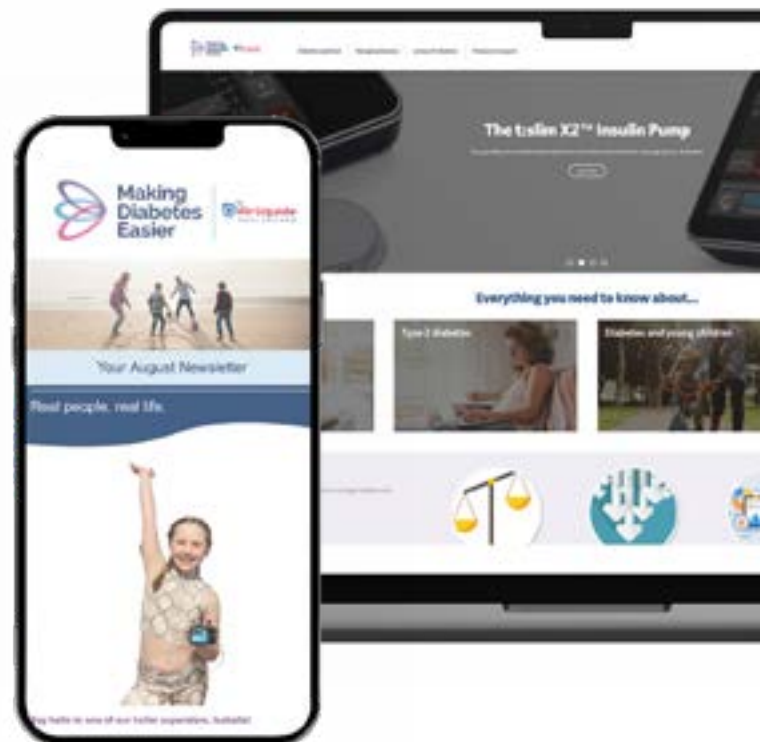
It's worth remembering that many patients receive their healthcare information from user-generated content. Forums like Reddit have become an easy way for people to discuss their health and seek the opinions of others to aid in their decision-making. Similarly, the use of TikTok is continuously increasing and more people are turning to it for healthcare information and support. DACs may target forums and apps like these but it's still vital you adhere to the regulations set out.
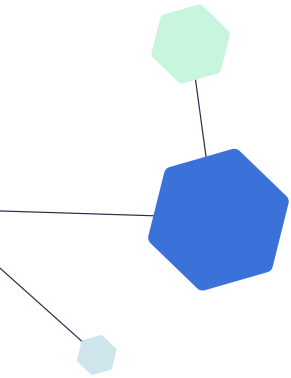
Information for prescribed patients: to gate or not to gate?

A question we are often asked is whether pharma brands need to gate information about POMs behind a secure login to ensure that only patients who have been prescribed the treatment can access it.

Some patients may not want to give their details to access information but it can have benefits. By gating specific content, you can ensure it's reaching the right patients and is less likely to be taken out of context. Patients deserve personalised care and gating content can be one way of doing just that.

Patient videos on YouTube are a good example of gating valuable content. You can make videos private and provide the patient with a unique URL that allows them to watch the video. This can work well for patients who are prescribed a medicine or product as it ensures they receive accurate information.

While UK regulations don't require secure gating of this content, they do state:

'If a website provides both information for the general public and copies of materials aimed at patients prescribed the product, the sections for each target audience should be clearly separated and clearly marked or the target audience'
(PMCPA, 2023)

In addition, they highlight the need to provide suitable non-promotional material (such as educational or disease awareness materials) and product reference materials so that members of the public do not need to access sections designed for patients, and that these sections are clearly distinguished.

The matter of gating the content – for example, requiring the patient to register or login to verify their status as a patient – is one that varies between markets. There is no specific requirement to do this in the UK, as long as areas intended for patients are clearly marked. However, many pharma brands choose to do this to meet the requirements of other markets, or to err on the side of caution.

In this context, care should also be taken to ensure that other areas of the code are not breached; for example, by unnecessarily sharing patient health data with the company.

When it comes to what should be contained in information for patients who have been prescribed a POM, the MHRA outlines a number of possible options for providing information and support. These include:

▶ **Leaflets about the disease and/or treatment**

▶ **Alert cards for patients to carry**

▶ **Educational information, such as how to administer the medicine (which may be in written, pictorial or video formats)**

(adapted from The Blue Guide, section 7.6)

It remains important that these items are factual, balanced, non-promotional and contain relevant information about how to report an adverse drug reaction. The MHRA highlights the typical practice of providing these materials to patients via the healthcare professionals caring for them.

Working with HCPs, not instead of them

The misconception that patient engagement strategies are all about replacing healthcare professionals (HCPs) couldn't be further from the truth. In reality, the most effective approach doesn't sideline HCPs – it empowers them.

Building bridges, not walls

Instead of creating a divide between patients and HCPs, patient engagement should be about strengthening the existing collaborative relationship. This means:

▶ **Providing valuable, informative content and resources tailored to both patients and HCPs, helping them understand the prescribed treatment effectively.**

▶ **Encouraging open communication and collaboration between patients and their HCPs, ensuring everyone is on the same page about treatment goals and expectations.**

▶ **Acknowledging the unique roles and expertise of both parties, fostering a partnership based on mutual respect and trust.**
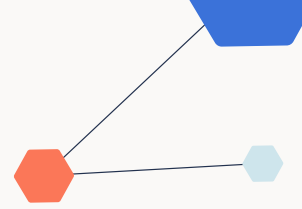
For pharma companies, effectively supporting this relationship can be the key to improved patient outcomes, treatment satisfaction and determining whether the new treatment or drug becomes the new standard of care, or falls flat.

The key things to remember for getting this right are:

▶ **Develop patient education materials that are clear, concise and evidence-based.** Give HCPs clear visibility over these materials, distribute them via HCPs, and/or involve HCPs and patients in the creation of these resources.

▶ **Put the patient first, across both patient and HCP-facing materials.** Ensuring that the theme of patient-centricity is consistent across both patient and HCP-facing materials helps deliver brand consistency and makes sure that care for patient outcomes comes across as authentic.

▶ **Create interactive tools and resources that support patients to take an active role in their care.** In recent years, tools such as apps, educational hubs and interactive patient guides have helped provide practical support for patients to manage their care. This has increased the perceived value provided by healthcare and pharma brands and helped tackle brand challenges such as treatment retention.

▶ **Facilitate communication channels between patients and HCPs, such as online portals or patient support groups.** Many of our clients, including leading pharma companies, are leaning into the power of digital platforms, such as apps and portals, to create a more joined-up experience for patients and HCPs and improve treatment continuity and adherence.

▶ **Provide training and support to HCPs on how to effectively communicate about treatment with patients.** On average, HCPs have 10 minutes per consultation with a patient. Providing practical support to make these consultations easier and more effective, from video explainers to take-home pieces, can all help to make the HCP's job easier and increase the uptake of treatment.

Patient support programmes: bridging the gap between clinical trials and real-world data

Patient support programmes (PSPs) have gained traction in recent years, owing to their ability to help bridge the gap between clinical trial data and real-world evidence.

In clinical trials, high levels of treatment retention are typically seen, often owing to the extensive monitoring, support and clinical contact between patients (participants) and the treatment centre.

However, often when treatments are delivered in a non-trial setting, pharma companies see higher levels of patient attrition and treatment drop-off, meaning that the positive outcomes seen in studies are not replicated in a clinical context.
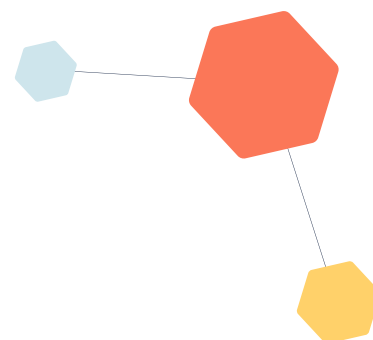
As such, under the regulations which allow them to provide supportive materials and tools, many companies provide some form of patient support programme.

In areas such as medical devices, or in the US, this can be easier to deliver due to the less stringent nature of the regulations. However, many pharma companies have successfully designed and delivered patient support programmes in the UK, from chemotherapy to gene editing to fertility.

These programmes can take many shapes, from in-person nursing services to telephone helplines, to interactive digital platforms.

Building trust and value with HCPs:

▸ **By establishing strong partnerships with HCPs, PSP providers can create a seamless communication loop.**

▸ **HCPs benefit from expert support in guiding patients on device usage or treatment protocols.**

▸ **Patients experience enhanced trust and are more likely to stay on track with their treatment journeys.**

The end result

Effective PSPs drive several positive outcomes:

▶ **Improved patient retention:** More patients adhere to their treatment plans, leading to better health outcomes.

▶ **Enhanced real-world data:** Access to richer data enables a better understanding of treatment effectiveness and identifies areas for improvement.

▶ **Stronger HCP relationships:** Collaborative care fosters trust and facilitates smoother patient referrals into PSPs.

> *By working with HCPs, patient support programmes can support treatment adherence, help manage complications and create a communication loop; growing brand trust, advocacy and improving patient outcomes.*

Medico's top tips for getting patient support programmes right:

▶ **Personalise your PSP to your patient group.** Patient support programmes for different diseases and treatments should reflect the unique needs of the patient group and the clinical context. From deciding whether to provide a chatbot or a telephone service or in-person nursing support, understanding the lived experience, preferred channels and the treatment-related challenges of your audience is essential.

▶ **Make it work for your budget.** High-touch programmes like personalised nurse support, while effective, can be pricey. They're typically reserved for expensive treatments or those with high drop-off risks due to side effects or travel challenges. More cost-effective solutions include chatbots, helplines and interactive digital platforms. But remember, budget isn't everything. Tailor the PSP to the patient, not just the cost or ease of implementation. For instance, a telephone helpline for patients with throat cancer? Probably not ideal.

▶ **Think digital.** Increasingly, digital solutions such as dose guidance apps and tracking devices are being viewed as part of the patient support infrastructure. These have helped to close the gaps between clinical trials and real-world evidence by increasing compliance, concordance and appropriate continuation of treatment. Another way digital solutions increase engagement is with the gamification of assessments. For example, GripAble is a mobile platform that assesses and trains hand and arm functions. Patients complete a range of activities, or games, which provide the HCP with real-time information on the patient's upper limb movement. With the help of gamification, healthcare can remain patient-centric while making rehabilitation fun.

▶ **Build trust.** Pharmaceutical companies often wrestle with a trust gap. Both patients and HCPs may approach company-backed programmes with a healthy dose of scepticism. Collaboration, clarity and transparency are essential to this, including how patients will be contacted and how their data will be used. Involving HCPs and patients in the programme's design from the ground up can also build trust and ensure the programme truly addresses their needs and preferences.
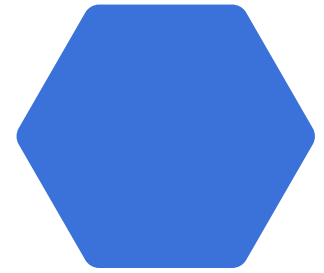
By embracing personalised support and delivering transparency, collaboration and a patient-centric perspective, PSPs can help close the gap between clinical trials and real-world patient outcomes, earning trust and providing meaningful support along the way.

HCP information: gating or open doors?

While patient engagement is our focus, it's important to consider how patient-centricity and compliance influence HCP information.

Fortunately, the UK's gating requirements for both audiences are similar:

▸ **Clearly marked:** HCP sections should be clearly marked and patients shouldn't be encouraged to access sections designed for HCPs.

▸ **Patient-friendly alternatives:** Patients shouldn't need to access HCP-specific sections to find answers. Information should be provided for them in appropriate areas (whether unbranded educational materials or product reference pages).

Companies approach this differently, from a simple self-selection option to a more rigorous registration and verification process. Ultimately, the most suitable approach depends on the required functionality; such as whether the platform needs to be adaptable to multiple markets, and whether the material is educational or a portal where HCPs manage patient care.

Consumer health and medical devices

Consumer health companies and medical device suppliers operate in a slightly less restrictive environment than pharma brands, with specific regulations set by entities like the MHRA, and broader standards set by the Advertising Standards Authority and the MDR advertising regulations.

Guidance is also available from the Proprietary Association of Great Britain (PAGB), the consumer healthcare association. They are the UK trade association for branded over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, self-care medical devices and food supplements. Their guidance can be invaluable information and can provide you with expert consumer knowledge.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is an independent regulator of advertising media in the UK. They apply the Advertising Codes written by the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP). ASA can provide you with advice and guidance on legal advertising regulations in the UK as well as process complaints from consumers.

The regulations set for consumer health products like OTC medicines and medical devices allow them to be promoted to patients, as long as they meet the required criteria.

Despite being able to mention products, patients don't like feeling they're being sold to. Therefore, consumer health and medical device companies need to produce genuine content that adds value and doesn't feel overly promotional.
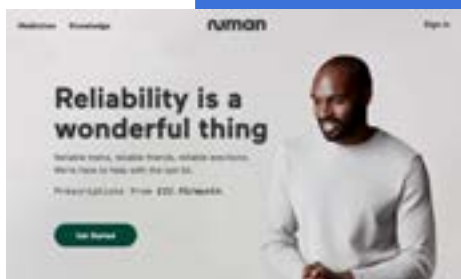
Example of consumer healthcare marketing

This consumer healthcare marketing by numan is a brilliant example of what it should look like. The language is simple and concise and it tells the patient everything they need to know at a glance. The CTA of 'Get started' is less intimidating than 'Call us', especially when dealing with sensitive health conditions. Patients may feel put off if they know immediately they need to speak to someone about a condition they don't feel comfortable talking about.

Consumer healthcare marketing should prioritise the patient and offer them clear, simple information. It should also provide them with ways of getting in touch that suit them and consider the challenges people with certain conditions may face.

5 steps to creating content that resonates with patient needs

At Medico, we've witnessed the full spectrum of patient content: the insightful, the misguided and everything in between. Drawing on our extensive experience, we've distilled five essential principles for crafting content that truly resonates with patient needs.

1. Leverage the power of social listening

Before embarking on content creation, immerse yourself in the patient universe. Engage with dedicated patient advisory groups, delve into online forums or conduct focused interviews. Uncover their anxieties, triumphs and most pressing questions. Don't merely skim the surface; seek the authentic gems that illuminate their lived experiences.

2. Prioritise authentic experiences

Discard generic topics that feel robotic and detached. Instead, let real patient journeys guide your content strategy. Tailor your information to their lived experiences, not hypothetical scenarios. The closer you reflect their reality, the more trust and connection your brand will earn.

3. Keep your language and tone of voice consistent

Knowing the right tone of voice for your marketing will come from social listening but you also need to consider what feels right for your brand. Keeping a consistent tone of voice across all your content, marketing or otherwise, will create a sense of brand familiarity for patients and consumers. The language you use needs to be simple and jargon-free wherever possible. Never assume patients know what something means. Create marketing content that is accessible to all.

4. Think about your marketing platforms

It's important to think about how patients will engage with your marketing content. This means ensuring it's mobile-friendly as well as looking great on a desktop. A lot of people use their phones when it comes to looking for healthcare information, so take the time to ensure it's responsive to the patient's chosen device.

5. Foster patient-doctor collaboration

Strike a delicate balance, be a trusted patient partner, but never claim to be the sole source of healthcare guidance. Your content should empower patients to engage more effectively with their doctors, not replace them. View your content as a valuable co-pilot, guiding them through appointments and complementing their doctor's expertise.

The power of patient voices: how user-generated content empowers

In the realm of patient engagement, there's a shift from one-sided narratives to genuine dialogue. A key driver of this shift is user-generated content (UGC) – authentic stories and real-life experiences shared by patients themselves.

Patients have various avenues to voice their opinions, with word of mouth and reviews being among the simplest. Trustpilot reviews serve as a crucial tool for others to assess the credibility and viewpoints on services or products. What's significant is the ability to engage with reviews on Trustpilot, allowing for the addressing of any negative feedback and expressing gratitude for positive ones.

In the vast landscape of websites and applications, finding reliable content is paramount. Patients often turn to platforms like Reddit, TikTok and Trustpilot to gather insights for making informed decisions. With the abundance of shareable content, informative articles can effortlessly reach a wider audience through dissemination among family and friends, extending the reach of marketing campaigns.

From lecturing to educating

Patients these days have little tolerance for being lectured or dictated to. Instead of 'shoulds' and 'musts', try offering ideas, asking questions and sharing tips and stories from other patients. This isn't just a trend; it's a recognition that patients are experts in their bodies and journeys, and is essential if you want to connect with today's informed patient.

Patient advisory groups: a powerful partnership

Patient advisory groups (PAGs) can be a powerful resource for healthcare companies. Not just there for feedback and ideas (although some of these can be absolute gold!); they're your eyes and ears on the ground, helping you understand current concerns and challenges faced by real patients. Their diverse experiences and willingness to share are invaluable for creating products and services that truly fit patients' needs.

Just remember, that members of PAGs don't always reflect the full variety of patient experience, as many more vulnerable patients or those struggling with their condition or other responsibilities may struggle to take part.

Open lines of communication

Building a patient community can look different for different companies. For example, for a medical device supplier in a low-risk category, online communities and forums may be much more achievable than for a pharma treatment, due to the regulations and risks involved. It all depends on your specific situation.

But there's one rule that holds true no matter what: be open and responsive. Patients want to feel heard and understood, even if it's just through answering their questions online (even pharma companies are permitted to respond with factual information to unsolicited questions) or recognising their lived experience. It's a trust builder and shows you genuinely care about their input.

Patient influencers

In the fields of consumer health and personal care, patient influencers can be an incredible asset for building brand awareness. However, they cannot be used for medical devices or OTC medications.

From ZOE's enormous success in social media advertising with Davina McCall and Steven Bartlett, to our recent partnership with Clinell, peer influencers are an incredibly powerful way to build awareness, engagement and trust in your healthcare brand.

Keep health literacy front and centre

One of the biggest barriers to effective patient engagement is unreadable information.

It's tempting to sound scientific by using technical jargon and long, complex sentences. However, this information often becomes inaccessible to the very people it's meant for.

Consider this: in the UK, one in ten people has the reading age of a nine-year-old or less and studies indicate that between 43-61% of people routinely do not understand health information (NHS England, 2016). Healthcare companies have a responsibility to make information accessible and easy to for patient audiences to understand.

Simplifying does not mean compromising the science; it's about presenting it in a way that resonates. Opt for concise sentences, straightforward language, relatable examples and diagrams or illustrations in place of walls of text to make information more accessible. The aim is to close the health literacy gap.

At Medico, we're working with the Patient Information Forum on validation under their PIF TICK scheme; giving us the UK's only independently assessed seal of approval for creating trusted, quality, accessible healthcare information.

Did you know?

80% of patients use online sources to research health information, with one in 20 Google searches being health-related.

(Mini case study: Clinell)

Choosing the right communication channels

When developing an effective patient-centric marketing strategy, choosing the right communication channels is crucial.

While hearing the term 'patient engagement' may make you instantly think of social media, it's important to recognise that not all social media platforms are the same. Depending on what you are trying to achieve, different channels may have more success than others.

Knowing which channel is right for your brand means understanding your audience. Different platforms have different benefits and it also depends on your budgeting considerations and general goals and targets.

Some people may have preconceived notions about certain types of social media. For example, you might assume that TikTok is purely for younger people. While there are a lot of younger people using the app, that doesn't mean people of all age groups aren't using it. Targeting your TikTok content to your audience means it reaches the right people – regardless of age.

Strategically selected social media

Different social media platforms appeal to distinct audiences. Therefore, understanding the demographics of channels like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok can help you align content towards your target audience.

But it's not just the patient that you need to think about. When someone is living with a certain condition, their friends, family and caregivers are all also impacted. So you should shape your strategy to resonate with a broader circle that extends beyond the patient itself.

It's also important to consider the functionality of social media platforms, as each type of social media platform has a variety of unique features. Facebook, for example, allows the creation of groups, a feature that's not present on all platforms. Meanwhile, the increasing movement of HCPs towards TikTok highlights the need to adapt to changing consumer behaviour.

All of this means moving away from creating content that you think patients will like. Instead, you need to use data-led insights to produce content on the channels that research is showing they actually use.

Did you know?

Almost 40% of the Gen Z cohort now search for information on TikTok before Google.

(Business Insider)

> *By recognising the diverse landscape of digital channels and their unique capabilities, your patient-centric marketing strategy can be effectively tailored towards the evolving needs of patients. It's also useful to use small platforms or formats (like X) to collect insight for your next piece of content based on the engagement there.*
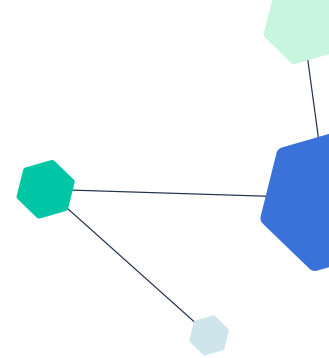
> *For example, you can test a topic on X and see how well the engagement fairs. If it performs well, you can look at creating a longer or different format of content around the topic on other platforms. You could turn one X post into a TikTok video or a Facebook post.*

Getting your content in front of the right people

In today's digital age, creating strong content, putting it out into the world and hoping for the best isn't going to cut it.

To reach patients through the digital noise, making your content as 'findable' as possible is often overlooked. But it can help make sure your content reaches the right people.

Organic visibility with search engine optimisation (SEO)

SEO isn't just nice to have. It's the key to making your content effortlessly discoverable. While navigating algorithms and Google updates can seem overwhelming, Medico's Head of Digital, Louis, says:

"Ultimately, getting the basics right can have a huge impact. We see tons of content where improving simple things - like having your headings tagged as 'H1 or H2' - can make a massive difference to how Google can read and index your content.

"As the search landscape evolves – including new developments like results synthesis – one thing is clear. Producing clear, valuable content which aligns with your audience's needs and questions isn't going anywhere."

Targeted reach with paid search advertising

In an information-saturated world, strategic paid advertising can help get the attention of your audience.

Different platforms, like Google Ads and social media channels, provide you with powerful ways of targeting specific demographics, interests and online behaviours. By making sure your messaging is personalised to your audience, you can maximise its impact and ensure it reaches those who need it most.

Actionable tips:

- ▶ **Carry out keyword research:** Use tools like Google Keyword Planner to find relevant search terms your target audience uses.

- ▶ **Optimise your website and content:** Integrate keywords naturally throughout your copy, meta descriptions and headlines.

- ▶ **Craft targeted ad campaigns:** Define your ideal patient profile and tailor your message.

- ▶ **Use social media analytics:** Track your engagement metrics to understand what resonates the most with your audience to help guide your content strategy.

- ▶ **Host interactive sessions:** Organise webinars, live chats and Q&A sessions to foster direct engagement. Connecting directly with your target audience can give you greater insight into what works and what doesn't based on their feedback.

Remember: reaching the right patients isn't a one-time effort; it's an ongoing conversation. By taking these practical steps and building genuine connections, you can empower patients to find the information and support they need on their health journeys.

Artificial intelligence and patient-centric marketing

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has reshaped how health and pharma brands can, and should, connect with their audience. Although generative AI may seem like a new concept, it's actually been used for much longer. Chatbots are a great example of this. Patients can visit a site and speak with a chatbot and get all the information about your product or service with ease. Most people now accept the use of chatbots on a site as the norm, so using generative AI in patient-centric marketing is not going to be brand new to a lot of patients.

Having introduced a new era of personalised patient interactions, generative AI allows brands to create content at a rapid pace. This can be an integral part of your content creation approach, especially when things change so quickly in healthcare.

Generative AI may help you create further growth opportunities and the ability to reach patients in more meaningful ways. But it's not a magic fix.

While it offers a lot of potential, AI is still in its relative infancy and needs to be used with caution:

▶ **Don't just create content for the sake of it.** To fulfil Google's requirements, generative AI pulls information from a variety of sources, most of which are high quality. However, you'll be penalised for creating content that's not high-value or genuinely helpful for your audience.

▶ **It's not always accurate.** Quality control is a big ongoing issue with generative AI, so it's important to quality control any content it produces to ensure it's accurate, up-to-date and created using valid sources. In low-risk industries, this might not pose as much of a problem. However, incorrect medical information can be the difference between life and death. Generative AI is limited when it comes to providing accurate information 100% of the time. The information generated may look correct to a consumer but when read by a HCP, it could be completely wrong. This is why you must proofread and check the accuracy of any content you have that's generated by AI.

▶ **Make sure it sounds human.** Generative AI and large language models have default tone of voice systems built in. These often defer to either a very formal, corporate, buzzword-heavy style or an inappropriately 'energetic' (cheesy), metaphor-heavy approach. While this can be overcome to some extent with effective prompts, all content should be passed through a real human (preferably a skilled medical copywriter…) to make sure that it's clear, concise and reflects the tone of voice and brand personality you want to communicate.
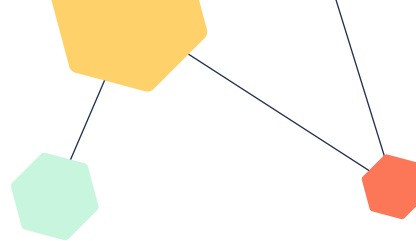
> *To use generative AI successfully, you will need to strike a delicate balance between incorporating strategic keywords and creating authentic content that ensures patient needs are being heard, understood and acted upon.*

💡 Did you know?

The market for AI tools used in healthcare is expected to exceed $34 billion by 2025.

(Business Wire, 2018)

Evaluating your success

Once you've put the hard graft in and are looking to gauge the success of your patient-centric marketing strategy, there are a few things you will need to consider.

The first is your objectives. Put simply, without knowing what you're trying to achieve, you won't be able to achieve it.

Whether you're aiming for a higher SEO ranking or looking to improve the perception of your healthcare brand, your goals should be front and centre when evaluating your success.

The metrics you use to determine the success of your campaign must also align with these goals. While likes and impressions on social media may be good, they often lack meaningful insight. Therefore, taking a more nuanced approach, like performing brand perception research, could provide a more accurate picture of your campaign's actual impact.

Using tools like A/B testing can also help you assess what has worked and what hasn't, allowing you to invest more wisely based on the results. Likewise, using data-driven insights to analyse a patient's user experience can provide detailed information to help with keyword research and content planning.

You should also embrace the need for continual improvement and not see campaigns as a one-off solution. Instead, you need to prioritise the patient journey, tweaking your strategy based on what you find and delivering effective content that resonates with patients.

- ▶ **Define clear objectives**

- ▶ **Avoid using vanity metrics**

- ▶ **Relate your metrics to your objectives**

- ▶ **Set clear parameters to contextualise your findings**

- ▶ **Tweak your strategies based on A/B testing and data-led insights**

- ▶ **Understand that success is a journey, not a destination**

Successfully measuring patient-centric marketing involves a strategic blend of relevant metrics, clear objectives and a commitment to continuous improvement. By embracing this way of thinking, you can seamlessly create data-driven strategies that not only engage patients but also adapt to their needs.
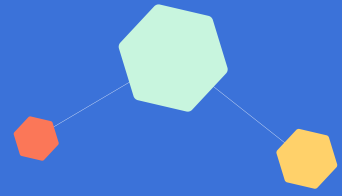
Case study

Nestlé Health Science

Working with our team at Medico Digital, Nestlé Health Science created a successful content strategy that prioritised patient behaviour across their portfolio of branded websites. We did this by:

▸ **Researching** common patient concerns and questions to create relevant, informative content.

▸ **Sourcing** patient testimonials to build trust and credibility and provide real-life insights into their products

▸ **Partnering** with patient advocacy groups to reach a wider audience and identify new content marketing opportunities

Using all of these data-led insights and collaborating with partners across Nestlé Health Science, our team were able to create actionable marketing strategies that put the needs of patients first.

This data-led approach then allowed us to build brand authority and awareness, delivering an 80% increase in new users and a 25% increase in website engagement per user year on year.

About Medico Digital

At Medico Digital, we help people live happier, healthier lives by connecting health and pharma companies with real people through brilliant digital marketing campaigns.

Here's how we do it:

Digital expertise:
Using various digital techniques like extensive keyword research, paid advertising and content marketing, we create highly technical, data-led omnichannel campaigns centred around specific regulatory criteria and guidelines.

Patient journey:
We have a deep understanding of the online patient journey. Through a collection of data and insights built up over our many years of working with healthcare brands (including healthcare providers) on digital campaigns, we know all the ins and outs of an online patient journey.

Relationship nurturing:
Through data-driven insights, we gather a detailed understanding of how HCPs, pharma brands and patients tick. Using this information, we can then nurture relationships between patients, HCPs, brands and other key stakeholders. We can also utilise the growth of patient advocacy groups to develop tailored content that engages in a much more personalised, natural way.

Award-winning work:
Not only do we pride ourselves on our work, but we also have the awards to back it up. We were finalists at the 2023 Drum Awards in Digital Advertising and are number 24 in the top 40 Creative Healthcare Agencies UK.

Performance marketing specialists:
We bring the best-in-class D2C e-commerce tactics to healthcare communications so your brand can excel in reaching your target audience and growing your overall reach.

Continual result tracking:
After launching our dedicated campaigns, we continually track and measure the results to ensure they are running smoothly. By keeping on top of the latest movements and trends within the digital and healthcare sectors, we can recommend updates, improvements and new campaign ideas to keep brands at the front and centre of patients' minds.

For further information or support on developing a direct-to-consumer healthcare marketing campaign with Medico Digital, contact our team. ▶

MEDICO DIGITAL

A practical guide for health and pharma brands in 2024... and beyond!

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