



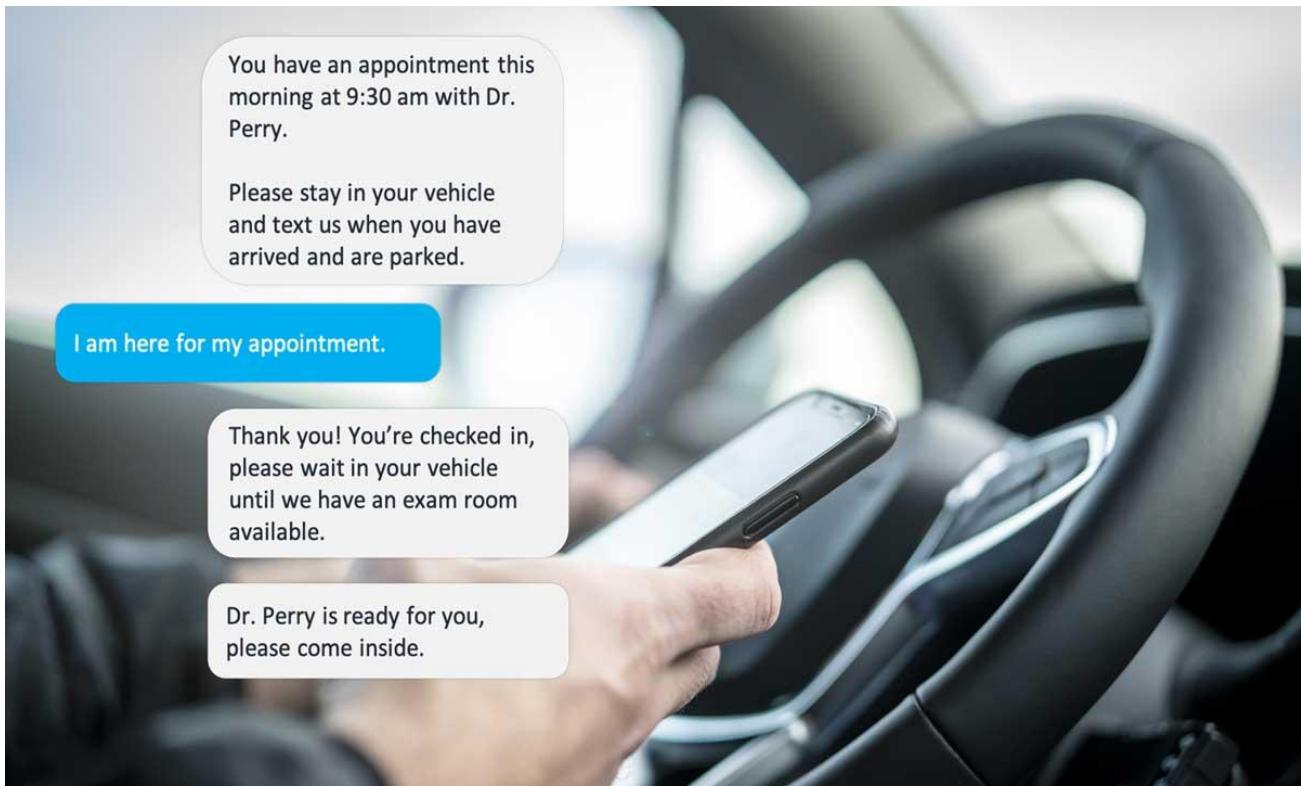
AWARDED #1
IN PATIENT
OUTREACH

Patient Engagement
Solutions to Communicate
with Patients During & After
the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

Since early March, the United States has seen fast, widespread action as the reality of the coronavirus and its dangers took hold of every industry in every state. Hospitals prepped their staff, postponed elective surgeries, and transformed entire units into dedicated COVID-19 patient beds, while medical offices fought their own front-line pandemic battle. Over the past several weeks, we've seen medical practices reduce patient loads, ask patients with non-essential appointments to postpone care or make the switch to Telehealth, some have eliminated their waiting rooms by having patients wait in their vehicles until a provider and exam room are ready or created separate entrances for well and sick patients so they never cross each others' paths. These are just a few of the quick pivots we've seen providers and medical offices make to protect patients and staff and they would be nearly impossible without digital patient engagement tools. They're using demand messaging to send critical updates and to guide patients to the right resources, sometimes into their offices for care, other times to testing sites or straight to an inpatient setting for higher-level care. Providers and their staff are also using patient chat and digital intake to further mitigate the risk of exposure for both patients and their staff. While some states are starting to re-open, others are still waiting for cases to peak before they can begin to lift restrictions and major precautions. Still, even as medical practices begin to see more patients in their offices, they will still have to maintain an abundance of caution and will need patient engagement tools to help their patients safely navigate a new outpatient experience.

We're here to help. Relatient customers have been sending millions of messages mentioning COVID-19, including everything from how to properly wash your hands, isolation protocols, where to go if you believe you have COVID-19, when to seek immediate medical care, information on how to keep other people safe while visiting their offices, and more.

There's a lot of information out there for medical practices and resources to help make sense of it all. We've compiled some of those resources below and continue to add to this article as more information becomes available and is relevant to this audience. We've also outlined some strategies and ideas for engaging patients effectively, based on how Relatient customers are using our patient engagement platform. We know there are other vendors offering similar capabilities so our hope is that this resource is helpful to you, regardless of who your patient engagement vendor is currently.

Resources & Help From The CDC, CMS, FCC, AMA, & Others

There's a lot being done to come to the aid of healthcare leaders, providers, and frontline staff as they work diligently to care for patients and caregivers. Here are a few of the most relevant resources and policy changes for medical practices to leverage during this time.

- **The FCC's \$200 million Telehealth program:** Announced within the last month, this fund exists to help advance telehealth services and devices for healthcare organizations, it's a result of the \$2 trillion CARES act also passed recently.
- **The FCC also made a declaratory ruling** in March that ensure healthcare providers can communicate with patients about COVID-19 without fear of violating TCPA regulations. This is important given the rapid rate of changing information regarding coronavirus, frequent and rapid communication to patients and caregivers is vital to keeping patients and healthcare staff safe and healthy.
- **In addition to the money designated for the FCC's telehealth program, the CARES act also makes advanced payments available to healthcare providers.**

- The CDC created a guide for healthcare providers, [Steps Healthcare Facilities Can Take Now to Prepare for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). This guide offers helpful advice for preparing, communicating, and protecting both your workforce and your patients during this outbreak. Key to this guide is the importance of keeping both your staff and patients frequently updated as the information regarding coronavirus is changing rapidly and at times may require swift action on behalf of your practice.
- [The Department of Health and Human Services](#) relaxed the requirements for conducting Telehealth for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, providers who aren't already up and running with a HIPAA-compliant Telehealth solution can quickly start assessing and treating non-urgent patient conditions via non-secure channels (think Facetime) in order to keep patients at home and reduce the spread of the virus.



- The American Medical Association recently published this [128-page playbook](#) for implementing Telehealth during COVID-19. It's an extensive resource for practices who have yet to adopt Telehealth but who are looking to make a quick start.
- The health innovators at Avia published a guide to some strategies you can implement quickly, [6 Digital Tactics Health Systems Can Implement This Week to Battle COVID](#)

Patient Engagement Strategies to Help Guide Your Patients & Protect Your Staff During During & After the Coronavirus Pandemic



Broadcast/Demand Messaging

Push critical updates to patients and staff as new information is made available. Below are some common updates providers are sending with Demand Messaging.

For Patients:

- What to do if a patient believes they have coronavirus
- How to access virtual/Telehealth visits in place of coming to the clinic/office in person
- Reschedule non-essential appointments
- Providers who have been furloughed and how to access care if it's still needed
- Do not bring children or additional adults to appointments or limit support persons to 1 per patient
- Sites testing for coronavirus and when a patient should or should not visit those sites
- Resources for reliable data and information, namely the CDC
- Extended or shortened hours of operation

For Staff:

- Updates on the number of staff members who have confirmed cases of coronavirus or have been exposed and what to do
- Changes to shift arrangements. Creating a "Shift A" and a "Shift B" to limit exposure, same staff always working on the same team.
- A call for extra help, extra shifts available
- Schedule changes
- General updates about the virus and actions taken within the community

 TEXT SAMPLE	 EMAIL SAMPLE	 VOICE SAMPLE
<p><i>"Thank you for confirming your appointment. When you arrive, please text us and remain in your vehicle until an exam room is available. We will text you when your provider is ready to see you."</i></p>	<p>IMPORTANT: Coronavirus Update Steps to Protect Yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Wash your hands often. -Avoid touching your face. -Avoid close contact with people who are sick. -Stay home when you are sick. -Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. -Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. 	<p><i>"Physicians Group is reaching out to our patients about the coronavirus. If you have a cold or flu-like illness, please call us prior to your scheduled appointment. Visit our website physiciansgroup.com for more information. Press # to listen"</i></p>

Messenger Chat/ Secure Messaging

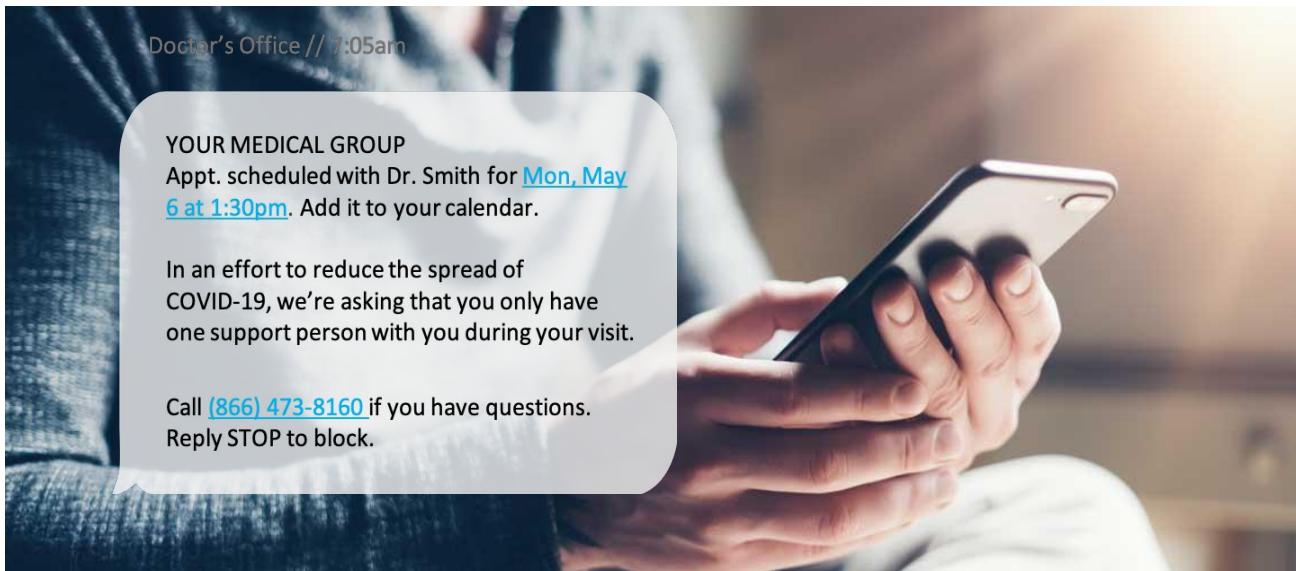
Answer simple questions, triage "phone" patients, and help patients get the care they need. Staff and clinicians can initiate 2-way conversations with patients related to the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and other health concerns. HIPAA and security protection are available for detailed or clinical conversations. Here are some conversations easily handled with Messenger Chat and Secure Messaging:

Messenger Chat

- Directions for parking
- Information about coronavirus testing sites
- Hours of operation
- Telehealth availability
- Changes to provider schedules
- Appointment changes

Secure Messaging

- Digital patient triage
- Questions about when to be seen and when to stay home
- Self-quarantine directions for infected patients
- Prescription refill information
- Questions about test results and care plans
- Patient follow-up



Appointment Reminders

Add new guidance or use short links to resources and telehealth appointments.

Medical practices are using appointment reminders to guide their patients through new check-in protocols, provide parameters for in-person visits, and educate patients with information about their options for seeking care or getting tested.

For practices who have implemented drive-thru testing or are having patients wait for their appointment time from their vehicles, appointment reminders offer a quick and convenient way to frame expectations and help patients stay safe when visiting their offices.

Medical practices everywhere are transferring as many patient visits as possible to telehealth appointments in an effort to protect both their patients and their staff. They're using appointment reminders to give their patients the option to transfer their scheduled in-office visits to telehealth appointments without having to play phone tag with clinic staff.

Finally, some practices are using short links to direct patients to CDC recommendations or other reliable COVID-19 resources.



Digital Patient Intake/ Pre-Registration

Use digital pre-registration to collect patients symptoms and screen for potential COVID-19 cases or simply to avoid the risk of spreading coronavirus through shared clipboards, pens, and paper.

eRegistration has been particularly important to practices who have made a quick shift to Telehealth as it enables office staff to receive all the same forms and payer information that would take place in a traditional patient visit. Even for those who have opted not to adopt Telehealth or who are offering both virtual and in-person patient appointments, eRegistration gives medical offices the ability to move the patient intake process earlier in the patient journey, jumpstart the patient financial experience by collecting payer information before the appointment, and eliminate the passing of germs through clipboards, pens, and paper forms.

Additionally, a COVID-19 screening form to digital pre-registration forms allows a practice to obtain prior notice of a patient who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or believes they have been exposed to the virus. Advanced notice empowers practice staff to reach out to patients who may present with coronavirus and guide them through the appropriate isolation and testing protocols, reducing the exposure risk to their staff and other patients.



Self Scheduling

Use a separate appointment type for COVID-19 screening/treatment and telehealth to give patients more options and further reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

For medical practices using patient self-scheduling or online scheduling, a custom sick visit for COVID-19 patients allows patients to self-identify during the scheduling process, providing practice staff the ability to reach out to patients and guide them through the appropriate protocols should they meet the criteria for COVID-19 testing or isolation. A Telehealth appointment type offered through online scheduling gives patients the opportunity to experience a streamlined, digital healthcare journey start to finish and helps medical practices drive patient volume to Telehealth appointments and maintain a revenue stream while minimizing risk to patients and staff.

What's Next & Getting Help

Telehealth or otherwise, the patient journey is digital.

If you're starting to think about what's next for your practice, you're likely expecting a better balance going forward between Telehealth and in-office appointments, it will be good to see your patients again! A strong patient engagement strategy will be important in communicating to your patients that your office is open, how to access Telehealth if they still prefer that appointment type, and numerous other foundational touchpoints of the patient journey. One thing is for sure, your patients have learned how to interact in a digital environment and they'll expect the same level of ease and convenience. [Check out this checklist](#) for tips to getting your medical practice back open quickly and efficiently.

Today it's coronavirus.

COVID-19 has shed light on healthcare's need for digital tools and the importance of a "here and now" timeline. Today, there's widespread confusion about coronavirus, but this isn't the first crisis, nor will it be the last. Relatient customers have been using our patient engagement platform for years to keep their patients and staff safe and informed during hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, blizzards, and more. Sometimes it's a major crisis, sometimes your provider is running behind schedule. Whatever the situation, we want you to have the confidence of knowing you're equipped with the tools to calmly and efficiently direct patients and distribute accurate, relevant information without tying up precious resources in manual outreach.

You should have a partner.

If you're a current Relatient customer with questions or looking for assistance to use any of the solutions mentioned above to inform and guide your patients, we want to help. You can [contact support](#) or start with our [self-service guide](#).

Need a quick reference or something you can share internally? [Download a copy of this infographic](#).

If you're having trouble getting the help you you, let's talk. We can show you how our solutions can equip medical office(s) to communicate with patients more effectively and why our customers made us the [2020 KLAS Category Leader in Patient Outreach](#). Whether its coronavirus, inclement weather, or general follow-up and prevention, we have the tools for effective patient communication. [Schedule a call with us](#).



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