The Business Values of Patient Knowledge Management (PKM) in the Healthcare Industry

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ABSTRACT

Today, healthcare has become a progressive industry with novel techniques, approaches and findings in this field quickly being evaluated and improved. One of these approaches is patient-centered care (PCC), which is defined essentially as an approach that respects and responds to individual patient’s preferences, needs and values. As such, PCC concept focuses not only on the disease, but also on leveraging specific information of a patient. PCC approach is therefore going to enlarge the role of patients and families in the process of clinical decision making. Still, the authors are observing the lack of innovation in this particular domain. In this paper, the authors develop the concept of patient knowledge management (PKM) based on customer knowledge management and PCC approaches. PKM creates many values such as decreasing opportunity costs and treatment costs, aiding patient decision making to be efficient and effective, as well as creating new knowledge and developing new treatment methods.

Keywords: Customer Knowledge Management, Healthcare, Opportunity Costs, Patient-Centered Care (PCC), Patient Knowledge Management (PKM), Treatment Costs

INTRODUCTION

The rising importance of the healthcare industry has every country vying to place a special interest in improving, developing and reforming healthcare services delivery. In developing countries, healthcare is growing and evolving, as patients can access many healthcare providers such as physicians, nurses, and other specialists when they are met with a diversity of health needs. Today, healthcare has become a progressive industry testing out various novel techniques, approaches and findings in the field. One of these approaches is patient-centered care. Patient-centered care is an important approach and concept; yet, patients are different in their perspectives and their views may not always match with the corresponding perspectives of healthcare providers (Edwards, Hall, & Shaw, 2005).

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The patient-centered care concept and related systems are mainly concentrating on patients. This approach is going to meet the needs of patients on a personal level. Patients actively need to engage in clinical decision making and their own treatment process. Many systems have emerged in the healthcare industry that can help patients manage their health status and participate in the treatment process. In business, there are some approaches that are increasing the role of customers in the process of product and service developments and improvements. One of these approaches is customer knowledge management (CKM). CKM is an approach that extends the organization’s services capabilities far beyond those of CRM and KM. CKM has some advantages such as profit gaining, competitive advantage positioning, and most importantly, innovation capitalizing.

 Unlike CKM, patient-centered care approach pays more attention to the patients. Moreover, patient-centered care approach is considered a non-profiting strategy. One of the issues, which patient-centered care approach ignored, is innovation. Innovation is a significant factor in the healthcare industry. Creating the appropriate conditions for inducing innovation is essential to create novel and advanced treatment and illness prevention methods.

 In this paper, we develop the concept of patient knowledge management (PKM) based on patient-centered care and CKM approaches in the healthcare industry. Our methodology consists of literature review, conceptualizing a PKM model, specifying the value proposition and articulating a conclusion. The literature review section includes the definition of patient-centered care and its attributes, patient-centered systems and CKM. In the next section, we will describe patient knowledge management and its values. Finally, the conclusion includes a summary of key thoughts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Patient-centered care approach is a critical element of the healthcare system. Today, the healthcare industry is transforming itself from a clinical-centered care system to patient-centered care. Prior studies have shown that patient-centered care must consider preferences and the needs of patients as well as aiming to improve patient satisfaction. Many related studies to patient-centered care focus on its attributes and systems that transfer such attributes. There are a growing number of definitions for patient-centered care. For example, the National Health Council defined patient-centered care as gained quality of services through cooperation between patient, families and the healthcare team (The Picker Institute, 2004). The Institute of Medicine defined patient-centered care in its 2001 report as respecting and responding to individual patient’s preferences, needs and values and also ensuring the patients’ values are considered in clinical decisions. Patient-centered care does not focus only on the disease, but also considers patients as different individuals based on their specific information (Leino, 1952; Mead & Bower, 2000; Levenstein et al., 1986; Saha, Mary, & Cooper, 2008; Berwick, 2009; Pelzang, 2010). This information helps healthcare providers to treat the illness from the patient’s perspective and appropriately respond to the patient’s needs and preferences. In one IBM press releases, patient-centric approach has been defined as “ensuring that they (the patients) receive the best treatment, at a reasonable cost, while putting into place strategies that will help individuals avoid becoming sick in the first place”. Patient-centered care is meant to change patients from passive consumers to proactive individuals who participate in the treatment processes and transfer their perspective to feedback into clinical decisions.
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