



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PATIENT ACCESS TO MEDICINES

ADDRESSING PATIENT FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

With the COVID-19 crisis causing unemployment rates to surge and incomes to be reduced across the country, **medication affordability issues are being exacerbated**, which can lead to negative effects on patient adherence and outcomes.

Most pharmaceutical manufacturers offer co-pay and/or free drug programs, and many are expanding them to manage the sudden large influx of patients in need. However, **patient and provider awareness and utilization of these programs is often low**. Because most patients learn about financial assistance through their physicians or pharmacies, it has become increasingly difficult to raise awareness during this crisis, as many providers have reduced their contact with patients.

Other non-COVID-related factors continue to impede uptake of financial relief programs.

Often, health care providers only discuss financial assistance if patients raise a concern about affordability—and patients are more likely to abandon their prescriptions or ask for less expensive alternatives than to ask for help.¹

Additionally, many people—both patients and providers alike—believe that financial assistance programs are **only for underserved communities** and that other people need help more than they do.

HOW DO WE ENSURE PATIENTS CAN START AND STAY
ON THE MEDICINES THEY NEED, EVEN
IF THEY CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO PAY FOR THEM?

**THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT PATIENT OUTREACH AND
ENGAGEMENT IS KEY TO ANSWERING THIS QUESTION.**



**ESCALATE
COMMUNICATION**



**SHIFT
EXPECTATIONS**



**ACTIVATE ALL
STAKEHOLDERS**



**INFUSE
EMPATHY**



ESCALATE COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND RELEVANT UPDATES



- Use direct-to-patient and/or direct-to-consumer communication to **expand patients' awareness** of programs
- Consider **expansion of financial assistance offerings** to address the impact of COVID-19 on patients (eg, extending deadlines and length of time for assistance, considering current income rather than the previous year)
- Consider **simplifying enrollment, tracking, and other processes for getting assistance**, since these tasks will fall upon patients more than usual due to limited provider capabilities
- Although provider outreach has decreased at this time, ensure that all communications that do occur **put financial assistance messaging at the forefront**

SHIFT PATIENTS' AND PROVIDERS' EXPECTATIONS OF WHO NEEDS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



- Remind providers to **not make assumptions about who needs financial help and who doesn't**, especially as COVID-19 has caused sudden job losses and decreased wages to become commonplace
- **Provide patient materials**, such as email templates or postcards, so providers can reach out to all patients to identify those in need and tell them about available financial assistance options
- Encourage providers to **ask patients at every point of contact** if they are still able to afford their prescriptions and raise awareness of assistance

ACTIVATE ALL STAKEHOLDERS



- **Tap into an expanded network to relay financial assistance education** to patients through a wider range of channels, such as pharmacies, social workers, case managers, advocacy groups, or community outreach organizations

INFUSE EMPATHY INTO YOUR COMMUNICATIONS



- Understand that **people process information differently when under stress** or in heightened emotional states and may have a reduced ability to focus or remember information
- Evaluate your communications to **ensure the tone is reassuring and supportive**, acknowledging how COVID-19 may be affecting patients
- Provide credible solutions and simple, actionable recommendations to **help patients feel empowered** to move forward and ask for help



HOW McCANN HEALTH CAN HELP

At McCann Health Managed Markets, we have robust experience in patient financial assistance program strategy, implementation, and communication. We can help you evolve your programs and materials for the COVID-19 environment—and beyond—to reach patients and stakeholders across all channels in an impactful and cost-effective manner.

PATIENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



STRATEGY



IMPLEMENTATION




COMMUNICATION

Because 90% of our choices are driven by emotion², it is always important to strike the right tone when talking to patients and providers. This is especially imperative in the current environment, considering the crisis communication principles outlined above.

90% OF OUR CHOICES
ARE DRIVEN
BY EMOTION 

Our **McCann Health Social Sciences proprietary empathy audits** use data-driven techniques to measure emotion within communications and help affect decisions in a positive manner, providing recommendations to improve the text and tone of your communications. Additionally, our **ARULE™ framework**, validated in partnership with Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, uses academically rigorous processes of health literacy to ensure materials are engaging and easy to understand and act upon.

McCANN
HEALTH
SOCIAL SCIENCES
EMPATHY AUDITS


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A content framework that empowers change

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Turn to McCann Health Managed Markets to help you increase the impact of your financial assistance communications to ensure patients can start and stay on the medicines they need.

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