

Ascentist Healthcare Cuts Surgery Wait Times by 96% leveraging OhMD's Autopilot

CASE STUDY - Ascentist Healthcare uses OhMD's Autopilot and two-way texting to establish a program that streamlines the process of scheduling ear tube surgery for children

Ascentist Healthcare significantly reduced the typical six-month waiting period for ear tube appointments to less than a week with OhMD.

Challenges

- Patients seeking ear tube surgery had to wait up to 6 months for an initial consultation in traditional hospital settings.
- Difficulty identifying eligible candidates for the surgery, resulting in delays and potential unnecessary appointments.
- Previous telehealth software's lack of user-friendliness and requirement for logins or portals hindered effective patient engagement and quick scheduling.

Solutions

- Implemented OhMD's HIPAA-compliant texting for appointment scheduling.
- Prospective candidates for ear tube surgery texted a keyword, triggering OhMD's Autopilot to ask a series of questions to screen for eligibility.

Results

- Reduced the typical six-month wait for ear tube surgery appointments to less than a week, a 96% reduction in wait times.
- Patients get scheduled within 5 minutes due to efficient eligibility screenings
- Received over 125 consultation inquiries via text within four months, establishing a consistent stream of candidates.

The founding physicians of Ascentist Healthcare began a small ENT and Audiology group in the 1940's. Over the past 80 years, the company has expanded into a multi-specialty group with over 60 providers offering services such as plastic surgery and pain management to patients of all ages and demographics from Kansas and Missouri.

In July 2021, Ascentist Healthcare sought out OhMD to provide an alternative patient communication platform to their previous telehealth software.

They implemented OhMD's HIPAA-compliant texting to improve communication across four locations, with plans to expand to additional locations in the future. Patients found OhMD to be more user-friendly than their previous platform as their messages were sent via text, eliminating the need for logins or portals.

Jenny Tuggle, Ascentist's Marketing and Project Manager, praised OhMD for its ease of use, saying "It's a lot easier to navigate between conversations to find a patient."

As a result of the successful implementation of OhMD, Tuggle and her team had the idea to create a program specifically designed to expedite scheduling for Tympanostomy surgeries in children.

The Challenges with Pediatric Surgery Scheduling

Tympanostomy surgery, commonly known as ear tubes, is [the most common](#) outpatient surgery performed on children in the US. [1 in every 15 kids](#) will get ear tubes by age three. The surgery itself can be completed in 15 minutes with most children being sent home the day of.

Ascentist discovered that patients going to other organizations in the Missouri and Kansas area were having to wait **up to 6 months** for an initial consultation to get ear tubes. Tuggle and her team at Ascentist would typically schedule potential candidates several weeks out, but those patients often had different diagnoses and may not need surgeries.

It was difficult to determine who was actually eligible for the ear tubes surgery. With over 125 appointments scheduled, they needed to minimize the wait time for appointments and make scheduling easier to get those who needed surgery scheduled faster. They believed they could do it much more efficiently by streamlining the intake and scheduling process.

That's when Ascentist turned to OhMD's texting and automated appointment scheduling as a solution to accelerate their ear tubes process.

Using [OhMD's Autopilot](#), prospective candidates for ear tubes texted in the word "TUBES" to request a consultation for an ear tubes surgery. The Autopilot would ask a series of questions to screen the patients for eligibility, and the answers would be sent straight to OhMD for review. It had all the necessary information required to create the patient's chart and schedule them an appointment for surgery.

Since the Autopilot can automatically collect the necessary patient information, it was so simple for Tuggle to schedule the surgeries when parents texted in. Without having to ask all the follow up questions on the phone, all the information required was at the ready.

(insert Autopilot audiogram)

The Results

Their surgery scheduling texting automation was up and running in less than 3 weeks.

Patients saw a **96% reduction in appointment wait time** for surgery with the assistance of OhMD's Autopilot. Instead of having to wait 6 months for ear tubes surgery in a traditional hospital setting, Tuggle and her team were able to schedule and see patients within the week when they texted in using the custom Autopilot flow.

With all the information at the ready via text, no additional phone calls were needed to get these patients in the door. The patients were then able to get scheduled **within 5 minutes**.

Tuggle partnered with pediatric groups that would typically refer ear tubes candidates to larger hospitals for surgeries. These pediatric groups would now refer children needing ear tubes to Ascentist and encourage them to text in the keyword "TUBES". Whether it was through word of mouth or Tuggle's email blasts, her marketing efforts were paying off.

This created a consistent stream of candidates for Ascentist, and now they receive 3-7 texts a day to request surgery for ear tubes.

Within four months of starting the program, they received over 125 consultation inquiries via text. With all the necessary consultation information in front of them collected via the custom Autopilot, it was simple to determine if the candidates were eligible.

Within those same four months, Ascentist completed nearly 70 surgeries. They could get the patients scheduled within the week compared to the multiple weeks it took them to schedule patients previously.

Because of how easy it was to schedule the patients through text, the patient would be able to be screened via text message and then have the surgery within a week. Parents responded with resounding praises and appreciation. Tuggle says, "the biggest piece of feedback that I've been getting from parents is that it's just so easy".

"This has definitely opened up accessibility for the surgery. A lot of kids will go without this surgery because they can't get into the children's hospital or they don't know that that's an issue for something that's such a simple fix.

This program and the use of OhMD, especially because parents can text in when it's convenient for them, has really made it accessible for more patients."

Bottom line implications?

OhMD's two-way texting and Autopilot tool enabled Ascentist Healthcare to revolutionize Tympanostomy surgery scheduling across the Kansas and Missouri area, delivering unprecedented results. By leveraging OhMD, Ascentist Healthcare was able to reduce wait times for ear tubes surgeries by an astonishing 96%, providing patients with faster, more efficient access to the care they need. This achievement underscores the incredible impact that technology can have on enhancing accessibility and efficiency in healthcare, paving the way for a better digital health landscape for all practices.