Ascentist Healthcare Generates over $1.25M in Revenue While Cutting 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 two weeks with OhMD, generating $1.25M in revenue.

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 patient communication platform 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

- Over $1.25M[1] in added revenue from fast-track ear tube surgeries scheduled via the Autopilot workflow, plus additional revenue generated from other surgery needs uncovered during consultations (tonsils, adenoids removal, etc).
- Dramatic reduction in wait time for surgery — from six months to two weeks.
- Expansion of the automated text workflow program into other health programs

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[1] Based on data from the Care Calculator by Sidecar Health
(https://cost.sidecarhealth.com/n/ear-tube-insertion-cost)

- A 92% increase in Fast-track surgeries with 66% increase in Autopilots initiated YoY[2].

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 so easy to navigate between conversations."

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 U.S. 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. "It's the simplest surgery, and it can have the biggest impact on a child's health," Tuggle says.

Wait times in the region were nearly 6 months and Ascentist knew they could help. So they 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 potential surgery. The Autopilot would ask a series of questions to screen the patients for eligibility, from simple demographic information to current health questions like the number of ear infections the patient has had in a specific window of time. Patient answers were collected and sent straight to the patient conversation in OhMD for review. With all the necessary information required to evaluate the patient's need in hand, clinicians could easily evaluate the need and schedule a "fast track" appointment for surgery.

"Integrating OhMD with athenahealth allowed us to establish a replicable conversation workflow that automated much of the information gathering we once did over a phone call. Patients appreciate the simplicity of texting to check eligibility and schedule

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[2] Comparing Jan-Aug 2023 to the same time period in 2024

appointments, bypassing portal messages and calls, but still allowing us to document our interactions in the patient chart in athenaNet," Tuggle says. "Integrating OhMD's two-way texting with athenahealth not only freed up our staff's time, but it also enabled us to speed up care delivery and had a massive impact on our bottom line.

The Results

Ascentist Healthcare's 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.

"We are now able to get these kids in for a consult and done with surgery within 2 weeks, which means they aren't experiencing the side effects of long term antibiotics and they aren't having speech issues any more," Tuggle explained.

By collecting information 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.

To promote the program and create a consistent flow of prospective patients, Tuggle partnered with pediatric groups in her area that would typically refer ear tubes candidates to larger hospitals for surgeries and offered postcards that could be distributed to patients with information on how to text in their information. Through these marketing efforts, the program took off.

Ascentist now sees a consistent stream of candidates and receives 6-9 texts a day to request surgery consultation for ear tubes via the automated text message flow.

Since the program launched in November 2022, Ascentist has received over **1,695** consultation inquiries via automated text with OhMD Autopilot, and **72%** of text inquiries converted to a surgery appointment.

Since the program began, the organization completed over **1,228** fast track surgeries scheduled through the Autopilot workflow. Besides helping patients quickly and efficiently, Ascentist enjoyed a revenue boost of over **$1.25 million**!

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."

Due to the ear tube program's success, Tuggle has used the model to expand into other areas such as esophageal cancer screening. "The test doesn't require anesthetic, it's done in the office and takes only 15 minutes," Tuggle says. Before implementing the workflow, Tuggle says someone in the office was spending hours calling patients that fit the program criteria.

To promote the screening, Tuggle set up an email campaign sent from athenahealth to message patients about the esophageal screening offering, while also using an OhMD workflow for greater outreach.

"At one point we were booked out 3 months," Tuggle says. "The OhMD workflow has been a game changer for us as we're able to help more people. With texting, I can be helping multiple patients at the same time, versus helping one patient on the phone for a call that can take over 25 minutes. But now, while I'm waiting for patient A to text me back, I can be helping patients B, C, and D. And that's huge for us and we can help more people which is really what we're here for."

Bottom line implications

OhMD's two-way patient texting and Autopilot tool enabled Ascentist Healthcare to set-up a successful workflow within OhMD that is repeatable for multiple procedures. By leveraging OhMD, Ascentist Healthcare was able to reduce wait times for ear tube surgeries and promote an esophageal screening test for eligible candidates, 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 driven by simplified conversation.