

## Digital Communications for the Digital Patient



Barbara McLaughlin

Barbara's expertise is HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY with a focus on Healthcare. A lot of the information presented to patients is not remembered, understood or complied to. Barbara's life's passion is to help patients navigate and comprehend the healthcare world so they are not so frightened and upset by the mere process.

Barbara worked with Smart Source to create a series of products and services whose primary function is to educate and communicate to the patients. Visit our website at [www.hand-holder.com](http://www.hand-holder.com) and see how we meet this challenge. Then send us your comments and ideas so you too can help take care of everyone and feel good about your life every day!

**W**e've seen it coming for a long time. We anticipated it coming for a long time.

It seems "a long time" has now arrived and the digital patient is a reality. So what does this mean?

The short answer is that patients now want and expect to receive, even their most complex medical information, by digital means.

The long answer is that patients have acclimated to the digital push by healthcare providers to access, consume, and respond to the medical world using electronic communications such as iPhones. Androids, computers and patient portals.

The explosion of patients demanding their information via text messaging and email has also exploded while the requests and demands for usage of telephones (be they smart or dumb) for communications is rapidly diminishing.

While all of this has put stress on our healthcare systems, and indeed on our patients too, virtually everyone is scrambling to meet these demands in a way that is affordable and tries not to impact the patient experience negatively. Health systems must also scramble to

manage and respond to the mounting volumes of texts and emails that are directed at all sorts of issues and departments, concerns and anxieties within a healthcare systems infrastructure.

Who is to answer the requests for information or medical concerns from a patient who tries to articulate things in a text message or email? And how does this impact the patient experience and engagement? What are the opportunities for misinformation or misinterpretation on both sides?

Undoubtedly there will be a learning curve on both ends of the new communications models cropping up nationally. How we address the learning curves while endeavoring not to leave patients feeling neglected or dehumanized as we make things more and more impersonal will be a very important factor in healthcare perceptions going forward.

What are you doing to help your patients feel connected to you as you employ increasing types of automated communications?

And who is vetting the automated information your patients are receiving? "It must be true - I read it on the internet!"