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AI-guided care orchestration for patient triage,
intake, and clinical decision support.

Healthcare Consumer Preferences Then and Now

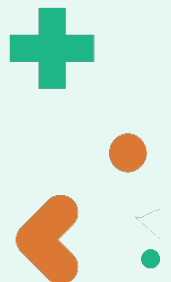
Growing Demand for Access and Digital Engagement Solutions

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Executive Summary

Over the past decade, healthcare has experienced a profound transformation, moving from a traditionally provider-driven system—rigid, opaque, and largely defined by clinical schedules—toward a landscape increasingly shaped by patient expectations. Today’s patients behave less like passive recipients of care and more like empowered consumers: informed, discerning, and accustomed to seamless, digitally enabled experiences across every facet of their lives.

In this new era, access to care and the overall quality of the patient experience have emerged as critical differentiators. Technologies that streamline pre-visit symptom intake, optimize clinician workflows, and enhance the coordination of care are rapidly becoming indispensable components of a modern, patient-centered ecosystem.

This article examines the evolution of healthcare consumer behavior, highlighting how patient expectations have shifted and exploring the innovative solutions that are emerging to meet these demands in a landscape defined by transparency, convenience, and digital-first engagement.

From Passive Patients to Active Healthcare Consumers

Just a decade or so ago, the healthcare system looked very different. Patients had limited access to reliable information about their symptoms or treatment options, making physicians the primary—and often the only—trusted source of guidance. The model was highly provider-centric: clinicians held the decision-making authority, operational processes were designed around provider schedules, and administrative workflows depended heavily on paper and manual data entry. Access to care was often inconvenient, with long wait times, confusing appointment processes, minimal pre-visit support, and geographic constraints that determined which services patients could realistically reach. Experience itself wasn’t viewed as a competitive differentiator; healthcare was treated as a necessary service rather than one consumers could choose based on convenience, transparency, or personalization.

The Forces That Transformed Healthcare Consumer Behavior

Over the past 15 years, a profound shift has reshaped healthcare consumer behavior, driven by a convergence of social, technological, and cultural forces that empowered patients and elevated expectations. The widespread availability of online medical information democratized knowledge, enabling patients to arrive more informed, ask pointed questions, and expect transparent, collaborative decision-making throughout their care journey. At the same time, the consumerization of other industries, from banking and retail to travel and food delivery, reset the bar for convenience, personalization, and seamless digital interactions, prompting consumers to expect the same level of on-demand access from their healthcare providers.

94%

of US consumers who had a virtual visit in 2024 said they were willing to have another up, **up from 80% percent in 2020.**¹

The pandemic further accelerated this change by normalizing telemedicine almost overnight, exposing patients to digital-first workflows and proving that care could begin before an appointment and continue afterward without friction. This willingness reflects a lasting preference for convenient, digital-first care options.

Provider adoption mirrored this trend: **telemedicine use among office-based physicians surged from 16% in 2019 to 80.5% in 2021,**² demonstrating that infrastructure for virtual care is now widely embedded in clinical practice. Meanwhile, the rapid rise of digital triage tools, automated symptom checkers, and AI-powered intake solutions familiarized patients with proactive, always-available guidance, establishing new expectations for clarity, efficiency, and 24/7 access. Together, these forces transformed patients from passive recipients of care into active, digitally empowered healthcare consumers.

Today's Healthcare Consumer: What Patients Expect Now

Today's healthcare consumer brings a fundamentally different set of expectations to every interaction, centered on fast, convenient access and a seamless, intuitive care experience. Patients now expect immediate answers to basic questions, clear guidance on where to go

¹ American Medical Association. *Telehealth Use and Consumer Preferences Survey*. AMA; 2024.

² Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT. *Telemedicine Adoption Among Office-Based Physicians*. ONC; 2021.

and how urgently, shorter wait times, and digital-first pathways that eliminate unnecessary phone calls and administrative barriers—standards shaped by the ease of booking a hotel, ordering food, or managing finances online. At the same time, they are far less willing to tolerate outdated processes like paper forms, repetitive storytelling, or unclear workflows, instead favoring mobile-friendly, user-centered experiences that respect their time and reduce friction across the journey. Equally important is communication that is empathetic, transparent, and easily understood; patients want to feel heard before they ever arrive, to receive straightforward explanations, and to know what comes next. In essence, they expect to be treated as active partners in their care—not as cases moving through a system.

The Reality: A System Struggling to Keep Up

Despite rapidly evolving patient expectations, many health systems still operate with legacy processes that make it difficult to deliver the level of access and experience consumers now demand. Persistent workforce shortages and rising patient volumes leave clinicians with less time for care as administrative tasks continue to absorb significant portions of their day. Physicians report spending an average of 15.5 hours per week on administrative tasks, with total work hours reaching 57.8 per week—**yet only 27.2 hours are direct patient care.**³ This imbalance often forces EHR-related work into personal time, contributing to burnout and reducing face-to-face engagement.



Access challenges compound the issue: the **average wait for a new patient appointment reached 31 days across six specialties in 2025, up 48% since 2004.**⁴ In some markets, waits are even longer—Boston averages 65 days, while Atlanta averages 12. These structural gaps widen the divide between what patients expect and what providers are currently equipped to deliver.

³ Sinsky C, et al. *Workload and Administrative Burden in U.S. Physicians*. Ann Intern Med. 2024.

⁴ Merritt Hawkins. *2025 Physician Appointment Wait Times Survey*. Merritt Hawkins; 2025.

How Digital Innovation Supports the Modern Healthcare Experience



As healthcare organizations work to meet rising expectations around access and patient experience, digital innovation is becoming essential. New tools are helping streamline workflows, guide patients more effectively, and free clinicians to focus on high-value care.

Smart triage solutions are improving access by asking adaptive, clinically informed questions, identifying urgency, recommending appropriate care settings, and helping patients understand their next steps. These capabilities reduce unnecessary appointments, improve routing, and shorten wait times—critical improvements in an overstretched system.

Digital intake tools are also transforming the patient experience. By allowing individuals to share their symptoms and concerns at their own pace through intuitive, user-friendly interfaces, these solutions help patients feel heard before their visit even begins. They eliminate redundant questioning, minimize frustration, and ensure both patient and clinician enter the consultation with clarity.

For clinicians, structured digital intake reports reduce administrative burden by providing organized symptom descriptions and key diagnostic clues before the encounter. Instead of spending the opening minutes gathering basic information, clinicians can focus on communication, empathy, and medical decision-making.

Digital intake and triage solutions:

1. Help patients feel heard before the visit
2. Eliminate redundant questioning
3. Promote clear communications between patient and provider
4. Reduce administrative burdens for clinicians
5. Improve the speed and accuracy of clinical decision making
6. Improve patient routing to the correct level of care and reduce avoidable ER visits

At a broader operational level, digital triage and intake tools support more efficient health system performance. Better routing, clearer documentation, and data-driven insights help

optimize scheduling, reduce unnecessary visits, and enable hybrid care pathways that blend digital and in-person interactions seamlessly.

Taken together, these innovations help align healthcare delivery with the expectations of today's consumers—who value speed, clarity, convenience, and a personalized, well-coordinated experience.

What's Next: The Future of Healthcare Consumer Behavior

The evolution of healthcare consumer behavior is far from over, with several powerful trends shaping what comes next. Patients are poised to become even more active partners in their care as new self-management tools give them greater visibility into their health data and deeper involvement in their care plans. Hybrid care models will continue to solidify, blending digital and in-person touchpoints into seamless journeys supported by smarter triage and increasingly personalized pathways. Meanwhile, advances in AI will push healthcare toward a more proactive and predictive model, surfacing risk patterns earlier and addressing concerns before they escalate. As these shifts accelerate, the patient experience itself will emerge as a true competitive differentiator, with hospitals and clinics distinguishing themselves not only through clinical expertise but through thoughtful design, modern technology, and deeply patient-centered processes.

Conclusion

Healthcare consumer behavior has undergone a dramatic transformation. Patients now expect rapid access, transparent guidance, and a seamless experience that reflects the digital convenience they encounter in other areas of life. Yet many healthcare systems continue to face challenges from outdated processes, inefficiencies, and rising demand.

Modern solutions that streamline triage, enhance the patient experience, and reduce administrative burdens for clinicians are increasingly essential. By enabling faster, more coordinated, and more human-centered care, these innovations help meet evolving patient expectations and support a more efficient, responsive healthcare ecosystem.

As consumer expectations continue to rise, adopting tools that deliver better access and improved experiences is no longer optional—it is the defining path forward for the future of healthcare.

About Bingli

Bingli is an AI-enabled healthcare solution that powers clinical decision-making with intelligent patient assessments and care navigation. Its proprietary AI model delivers multilingual, guided clinical history taking, smart triage, and differential diagnostic capabilities that help patients get the right care from the first interaction. Bingli's configurable digital-first solution captures structured clinical information in a convenient, easy-to-use format, enabling faster, more informed decisions. With an empathetic and scientifically grounded approach, Bingli equips care teams with accurate, high-quality data and actionable insights that optimize efficiency and reduce healthcare costs. Learn more at Bingli.us.