



# **The Growing Importance of the Patient Experience**

*A Focus on Service Helps Practices*

*Preserve Patient Loyalty and Attract New Patients*



QUALDERM  
PARTNERS

Healthcare is a service industry and patient expectations of their providers have changed.

In the last decade, the patient experience has taken on a larger role in how patients judge their overall quality of care. The ease with which a patient can publicly share their experience, both good and bad, has grown as well. Today, online reviews hold significant weight in a provider's ability to attract new patients.

Quality of service is difficult to quantify since each person holds their own idea of what constitutes good or bad service. That is why, typically, service is only noticed when it exceeds or fails to meet an individual's expectations. In fact, according to a survey by online review platform GatherUp, it is that same exceeds or fails criteria that prompts 33% of people to post an online review.

## The Patient Journey

In the healthcare sector, quality of care is measured by outcomes. However, patients assess quality based on a much broader range of standards. For the most part, patients assume the medical care they receive is correct. Last year, the American Board of Internal Medicine issued a report in conjunction with the University of Chicago on the level of public trust within the U.S. healthcare system. That report stated that in a nationwide survey, 84% of people said they trust physicians.

The patient experience doesn't begin and end in the exam room. In fact, there are at least 11 points within the patient journey for each appointment. Those points include:

1. Appointment scheduling
2. Pre-visit communication
3. Arrival at the facility
4. Front-desk check in
5. Waiting room
6. Patient transport to exam room
7. Provider interaction
8. Checkout
9. Post-visit follow ups
10. Billing / bill pay
11. Ongoing engagement / communication

## What Patients Are Saying

Online Reviews Impact Your Practice\*

- 75% of patients consult online reviews before booking an appointment
- 60% say a positive online reputation is very important in selecting a healthcare provider
- 69% say they won't consider a provider with an average star rating lower than 4.0 out of 5
- 85% of patients ages 30-44 look for providers online – the most active age group
- 43% of seniors use online provider reviews
- 39% say they comment on a clinician's friendly or caring attitude in reviews

36% of patients say they have left a healthcare provider in the past two years — 8 of 10 did so because of a poor in-person experience and/or lack of access and communication.\*

At each point along the patient journey, from scheduling to ongoing engagement, the staff has the ability to positively or negatively impact the patient experience.

## A Service Mindset

While there are specific elements for which staff can be trained, for example on how to properly greet patients, the key to consistently delivering an exceptional patient experience is to foster a culture of service. Encouraging and empowering all staff members to provide outstanding service and to professionally manage issues as they arise gives staff the freedom to identify needs and work to fulfill those needs within the best of their ability. Further, promoting a culture of service also relates to how an organization's teammates relate to one another, helping to enhance job satisfaction and alleviate burnout.

Since its inception, QualDerm Partners has built a reputation for quality, and network-wide its affiliated practices have earned exceptionally high marks in online reviews. Still, in alignment with its core values of quality and continuous improvement, the QualDerm Quality Council recently launched a Service Excellence initiative. The goal of this initiative is to elevate the focus on the patient experience so practices will work to exceed patient expectations.

Earlier this year, the Quality Council established a Service Excellence subcommittee to guide, implement and provide ongoing support for the initiative. The physician-led subcommittee is made up of 16 members, including 7 MDs and APPs, 5 practice operators who represent each region, as well as 4 Qualderm leadership team members.

The Service Excellence initiative is not a step-by-step playbook, but an ongoing mindset of values to be instilled within the organization's culture. It is not a cookie-cutter approach, but rather a sharing of best practices centered around the QualDerm Pillars of the Patient/Teammate Experience.

## QualDerm Affiliated Practices' Online Reviews

Network-wide, QualDerm-affiliated practices have earned an average of 4.8/5 star reviews. Here is what patients are saying about our providers:

- Compassionate
- Listens to me and explains
- Truly cares
- Friendly and kind
- Takes their time
- Made me feel comfortable

## QualDerm Pillars of the Patient/Teammate Experience

Every patient and teammate should feel:

*Valued*  
*Heard*  
*Respected*  
*Cared for and about*

The committee first identified opportunities for and challenges to enhancing service, with the understanding that for the initiative to gain traction, affiliated physicians throughout the network must be engaged. The committee also acknowledged that this initiative could not be too cumbersome or overly time consuming for the practices. Therefore, it developed material to be shared with practices via team huddles.

During each “Practice PULSE” meeting, the practices’ teams explore 1 service-oriented theme. The goal of these sessions is to spur meaningful dialogue and reflection, and also highlight the importance of providing professional, compassionate and efficient high-quality care. To launch the initiative, the committee chose 3 themes for the Practice PULSE sessions: *Significance of Patient Service Excellence, Leadership & The Team*, and *Patient Perception*. Each month, the theme is introduced to the practice by the physician leader, then the theme is further discussed on a weekly basis during brief team huddles. The committee also created methods to recognize and reward service excellence within the practices.

Practice PULSES were piloted at 8 affiliated practices. Prior to the roll out, service champions were identified at each practice to facilitate the sessions, as well as to be responsible for the ongoing accountability and engagement at their practice. The pilot program garnered a positive reception from team members and highlighted areas in which the committee can enhance the initiative as it is instituted network-wide in 2023.

The Service Excellence committee has set goals for next year to build upon its initial success. In addition to expanding its membership to include other levels of practice staff, the committee will develop additional PULSE themes to share. Service Excellence measurements will be incorporated into operations reports and as an element of performance reviews. The committee will also work to develop company-wide templates and standards for introducing Service Excellence during the onboarding process, both for new practice staff members as well as for new practice partners. The committee’s ultimate goal is to make its programs meaningful and productive in order to ensure Service Excellence is engrained within QualDerm’s culture.

### The QualDerm Practice PULSE

Plan for excellence

United in all we do as a team

Listening to our patients and team

Serving others is what we do

Excellence with every touch point

# About QualDerm Partners

QualDerm Partners helps top-tier dermatologists position their practices for sustainable growth and profitability. The company creates market-leading practice partnerships through affiliations and de novo development. QualDerm provides the management support, capital, and guidance for growth. Under QualDerm's True Partnership<sup>SM</sup> model, physicians are partners, not employees, and retain their own practice brand. This doctor-driven model is designed to maintain physicians' clinical autonomy and ensure the highest-quality patient care. QualDerm offers physicians tailored partnership structures to meet their needs, as well as the option to sell their practices.



QualDerm currently has 63 affiliated practices in North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey, with plans to expand further. For more information, visit [www.QualDerm.com](http://www.QualDerm.com).

To learn more about partnership opportunities or to discuss selling your practice, contact Ashley Johnson, Chief Development and Integration Officer at [ashley.johnson@qualderm.com](mailto:ashley.johnson@qualderm.com) or 615.250.6736.

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