

Case Study: Filling a Cardiovascular Pipeline

One of the largest Academic Medical Centers (AMC) in the Southeast and a major research hospital uses ShareMD Connect to improve the consumer pipeline to its



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Challenge

Emory Healthcare, a leading academic medical center, provides cutting-edge levels of cardiovascular care for its patients and carries one of the highest volumes for valve procedures and atrial fibrillation procedures completed in the southeast. However, much like many healthcare systems, the center struggles to find and engage new consumers and is seeking new sources of revenue growth.

Nationwide cardiology procedures average a contribution margin of around 22%, creating a significant risk for healthcare providers if they cannot optimize these pipelines for consumer demand. However, federal HIPAA regulations and OCR guidance make finding and engaging new consumers nearly impossible.

Like many heart valve and arrhythmia centers across the U.S., Emory relies mainly on referrals and a pool of existing patients to fill its procedure pipeline. But research shows that nationwide, using referrals to find a provider has declined by 44% since 2018. Meanwhile, 81% of hospitals and health systems nationwide cite improving customer experience as high priority. But only 11% say they have the capabilities to execute a best-in-class customer experience, according to research from Kaufmann Hall.

While the capacity to perform more atrial fibrillation and valve procedures is available, over time the pool of patients has become smaller resulting in an unbalanced level of supply and demand.

This challenge leaves many healthcare providers stuck and searching for a different approach to engage potential consumers and increase revenue.

Solution

Emory Healthcare became an ideal candidate for ShareMD Connect's solution to help boost its new consumer pipeline, starting specifically with prospective valve disease patients.

First, ShareMD began by working directly with the heart valve center to identify key potential areas of growth. The result was a focus on consumers with valve disease that ranged from those with heart murmurs to those in need of valve repair or replacement procedures. Over time, the partnership expanded and ShareMD began to generate consumers for the arrhythmia center that focused on those living with AFib.

Next, ShareMD leveraged its proprietary healthcare consumer segmentation solution to find and target consumers more accurately. This approach utilized a unique journey built around consumers' pain points, informational needs, and clinical triggers for action. Once created this journey was then applied to a specific condition to create a targeted, engaging, and consistent consumer experience.

Through dozens of touch points across multiple marketing channels, ShareMD was able to connect with these consumers and progressively learn more about them. Once sufficiently warmed, consumers were activated by talking with a ShareMD nurse.

While connected with a nurse, each consumer was educated on the basics of their condition and shared more details about their journey. Our nurses took the time to fully assess their needs and qualified whether each person was a fit for providers at either the heart valve or arrhythmia center. Our nurse educators spend as much time as necessary to help the consumer fully understand their individual health journey -- our average call length is 48 minutes. If the consumer was a fit, our team of nurses connected the consumer to the appropriate center through a dedicated intake process. If not, our team routed the consumer to alternate sources of care.

Because ShareMD is a third-party solution that engages consumers as consumers and not a covered entity, we are able to hand-off qualified consumers directly to the heart valve or arrhythmia centers. And—if permission was granted by the consumer—we provided the necessary information needed to schedule an appointment that had been volunteered throughout the consumer's engagement with

ShareMD. This unique level of targeting and engagement that ultimately improved the consumer pipeline for this particular heart valve center, is simply impossible for healthcare networks to achieve on their own due to federal guidelines and regulations.

Quotes

“This solution is great—At least 50% of the patients that I typically see should not be here. This solves that issue for me.”

- Cardiothoracic Surgeon, Large Midwest Academic Medical Center

“Is that one of those ShareMD Transfers? Get them in here now!”

- Electrophysiologist, Large Southeastern Academic Medical Center

“We’re very appreciative of Nurse Lynn. We have no words. I’d love to let somebody know, had it not been for contacting you, my husband would not be having this procedure done in the best hands. The scheduler was told that the patient was referred by ShareMD, and they got us in first thing. People need to know that ShareMD exists for a good reason, and your resource center works, and your personal services work. The attention that you gave to our family was immediate and we are indebted to you because, you know, this is a LIFE—this is life-saving. We want to let people know that they can really count on ShareMD because you guys really do what you promise you will do. I’m so glad you guys popped up on my Facebook. I’m very happy.”

- Atrial Fibrillation Patient, Atlanta, GA

Results

Total transfers: 63

Valve results:

Number of high intent leads generated: **174**

Number of engaged calls: **36**

Number of qualified transfers: **7**

Number of appointments: **4**

Number of consumers in treatment: **2**

AFib results:

Number of high intent leads generated: **817**

Number of engaged calls: **149**

Number of qualified transfers: **44**

Other cardiovascular transfers: 9

General Cardiology: **6**

Vascular: **2**

Heart Failure: 1

Non-cardiovascular transfers: 3

Pulmonary: 1

Palliative Care: 1

PCP: 1

Definitions:

Number of high intent leads generated: Leads who spoke to a ShareMD nurse

Number of engaged calls: Leads who showed interest in our offering

Number of qualified transfers: Leads warm transferred to Emory by a ShareMD nurse

Number of appointments: Leads who scheduled an appointment with Emory

Number of consumers in treatment: Leads confirmed to be in treatment at Emory

Looking at AFib and Valve Disease Results—Why so different?

Pilot: ShareMD Connect ran campaigns for two conditions: AFib and Valve Disease.

Online competition and consumer activity online all impacted the ability to target, engage, and transfer these audiences.

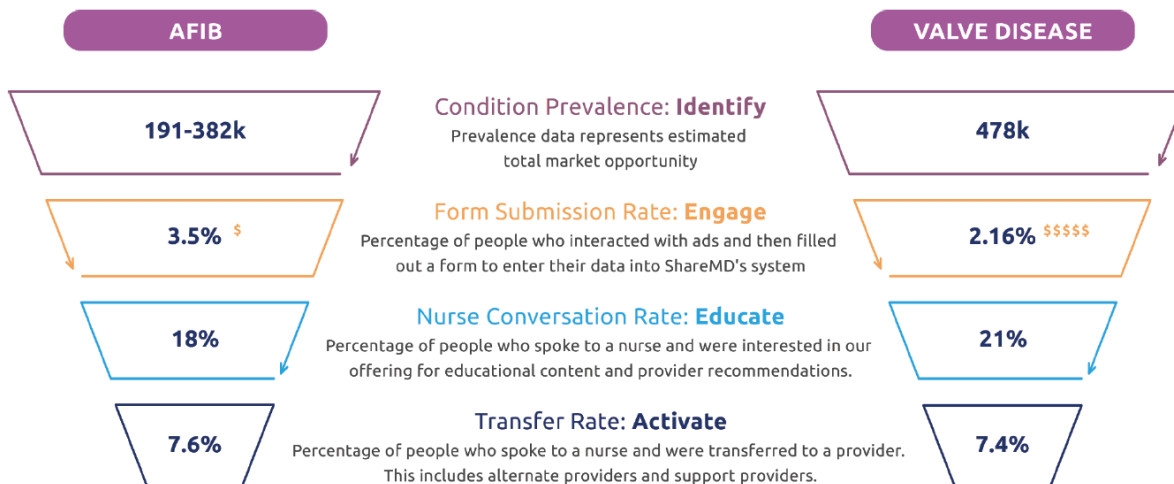
What we found is that consumers with AFib will convert at a higher rate and lower cost than those with valve disease. Conversion costs for valve disease were 5x more expensive than conversion costs for AFib. People with AFib are more active online than people with valve disease, as evidenced by 6.4 times the amount of people interacting with Social Media ads for AFib vs valve disease. However, those who did convert with valve disease are motivated to act. At the point of a consumer speaking with a nurse, the funnels begin to look similar, with a 7.6% transfer rate for those with AFib and a 7.4% transfer rate for those with valve disease.

One of our hypotheses to explain this is that people with AFib deal with a large amount of life disruption (i.e. prescribed expensive anticoagulation, modification of activities in fear of triggering a recurrent event) that leads to greater online information seeking activity when compared to those with valve disease. Furthermore, valve disease usually does not cause symptoms until it is more severe, whereas AFib can cause severe symptoms at any point. There is no such thing as "mild" AFib, like there is with aortic stenosis.

Another possible factor is that people with valve disease may not be as concerned because their disease won't always progress to the point of needing treatment. In fact, only 10-20% of those with aortic stenosis or mitral regurgitation end up needing a surgical fix to their underlying problem (Sources: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12221042/>; <https://academic.oup.com/eurheartj/article/25/3/185/563483>; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12221042/>) . The "watch & wait approach" is commonly accepted by providers and therefore plays a large role in how patients are educated about their diagnosis.

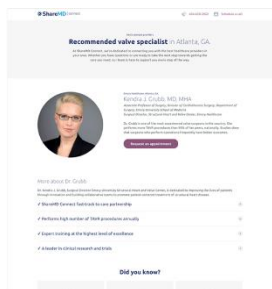
This series of learnings across the various conditions led the ShareMD team to develop an ongoing "Theory of Engagement" scale-based on multiple factors such as degree of symptomatology, life disruption, and overall concern for one's condition. This theory can be applied across many conditions that ShareMD also targets, such as cancer and orthopedic disease. Based on clinical observations and known behavioral patterns, it is expected that the higher the pain level or fear for progression or worsened outcomes, the more likely a person is to take proactive steps in their healthcare journey. This provides a lens through which ShareMD can develop models that accurately reflect expected results by condition.

How The Funnel Differs Between AFib and Valve Disease



Featuring Emory Healthcare as the preferred provider

Leading providers from Emory Healthcare were strategically presented to consumers at key points along the consumer journey.



For Valve Disease, consumers were converting on ads promoting “find a valve specialist near you.” These ads appeared on social media, paid search, and display networks. Once a consumer converted, they were served a page promoting Dr. Grubb. Here is an example of a landing page promoting Dr. Grubb. Additional placements including within content offers, assessments, and email.



After the conversion, our team of nurse educators reached out to connect with the consumer. During the conversation, nurse educators worked with the consumer to identify needs and provide solutions. If appropriate, the nurse team either transferred the consumer to Emory directly or shared the provider information and followed-up at a later date. Here is an example of a follow-up email sent by a nurse to the qualified consumer.



The same process was followed for consumers with AFib. Below is an example of the providers promoted to consumers.

ShareMD Pulse: Emory Assessment Sample

As an additional service, the ShareMD team conducted a complete assessment of Emory's cardiovascular consumer access experience. This assessment, called ShareMD Pulse, answers the question: "how easy or difficult is it for a consumer to become a patient at a given healthcare facility?"

The Problem: Most healthcare systems don't understand their overall consumer experience from initial online search to a scheduled appointment. They suffer from a number of consumer barriers resulting in ineffective marketing efforts and decreased new patient acquisition.

The Solution: ShareMD Pulse is a consumer access assessment that enables a provider to drive more appointments by delivering a seamless pre-patient journey. From first online search for appointments scheduled, ShareMD Pulse uncovers and recommends opportunities for improvements and growth.

ShareMD Pulse specifically looks at these three main areas of the consumer journey:

- 1) Web experience: This includes SEO and SEM results, ADA and WCAG accessibility compliance, OCR compliance, and website features.
1. 2. Lead generation: This includes website lead capture capabilities, educational content, condition-specific services offering, and alternate scheduling methods by service line.
2. Scheduling experience: Call scheduling experience and call center representative customer service by service line. We also provide a comparison of your scheduling experience against key competitors within your market.

Sample Assessment Results: ShareMD conducted a Pulse consumer access assessment from January to February 2023 to identify any barriers to entry for new patients into the Emory cardiovascular service line system wide. Scores are presented on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent. *[Full detailed Pulse assessment results are available upon request.]*

Below you will find Emory's consumer experience scores broken down into the three main areas of the consumer journey: overall website experience, overall lead generation, and overall scheduling experience.

Overall Website Experience

4.2

The health system website is non-compliant with WCAG, and several issues should be fixed immediately. The health system is currently **at risk of accessibility lawsuits.**

Overall Lead Generation

1.5

Opportunities to capture lead information exist, but aren't utilized. There is **only one method to capture leads**, but opportunity to capture information exists in many places.

Overall Scheduling Experience

3.2

On average, it took **26.5 minutes to schedule a new patient cardiology appointment.** Average time to schedule a new patient cardiology appointment amongst competitors was **6 minutes.**

Below are Emory's scheduling experience scores broken down by key factors that affect the consumer experience. As you can see, key areas of severity point to total time to schedule across all cardiovascular departments, as well as availability issues within heart failure and valve disease clinic.

Questions	Gen. CVD	AFib	PVD	CR	CHF	VHD	Average
1.1 Wait time to speak with someone	3.9	3.1	3.3	5.0	3.2	3.8	3.7
1.2 Information inputs before speaking with someone	2.6	3.2	3.3	5.0	2.6	2.8	3.3
1.3 Appointments scheduled during call	5.0	4.3	5.0	3.0	3.0	4.2	4.0
1.4 Total time to schedule	2.0	2.1	2.3	1.0	2.2	2.0	1.9
1.5 First available appointments	2.7	2.1	3.7	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.4
Condition Average	3.2	3.0	3.5	3.4	2.4	3.0	3.1

[CVD: cardiovascular disease, PVD: peripheral vascular disease, CR: cardiac rehabilitation, CHF: heart failure, VHD: valvular heart disease.]

Below is a competitor analysis of Emory's key competitors in the Atlanta market and how they scored in the same key areas for appointment scheduling experience. As you can see, competitors tend to outperform Emory in first available appointments and in total time to schedule appointments. Across the board in the Atlanta market, required information for scheduling appointments is a consistent challenge for new patients seeking care.

Questions	Emory	Piedmont	Northside	Wellstar
1.1 Wait time to speak with someone	3.7	4.4	4.6	3.3
1.2 Information inputs before speaking with someone	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.7
1.3 Appointments scheduled during call	4.1	3.2	3.2	3.4
1.4 Required Information for Appointment Scheduling	1.9	1.8	1.8	2.2
1.5 First available appointments	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.1
1.6 Total Time to Schedule Appointment	2.4	4.4	4.2	4.2

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About ShareMD Connect

ShareMD Connect drives rapid impact growth by finding, engaging, and converting qualified, high-lifetime value consumers into your health system. Our mission is to improve the quality of healthcare for everyone by enabling faster service and specialized, human-centric support for more people, not just to the most privileged. Learn more at connect.sharemd.com.



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