

NAVIGATING COVID-19: CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR HELPING PROVIDERS OVERCOME ACCESS AND REIMBURSEMENT CHALLENGES

FEATURED SPEAKERS: Tommy Bramley, Ph.D., President, Lash Group; Mark Beightol, Vice President, Client Delivery, Lash Group; Corey Ford, Director, Reimbursement and Policy Insights, Xcenda; and Melissa Mulchahey, Vice President, Field Services, Xcenda

IDEAS THAT MATTER

- Demand for **patient support and financial assistance** is likely to grow in the coming months.
- **Technology and process solutions** can simplify access to patient assistance programs.
- To support physician practices during this challenging time, manufacturers' field services teams must be **flexible, collaborative, and communicative**.

- **People are venturing out again.** Many patients are increasingly comfortable visiting healthcare facilities for injections or infusions. Demand that was expected in March and April may materialize in the coming months.
- **Medicaid cuts may be coming.** State governments may face hard budget decisions as tax revenues decline. Medicaid cuts could affect eligibility and drive up uninsured rates, particularly for select populations.
- **Pay cuts may increase the need for commercial co-pay assistance.** Many individuals with commercial health insurance have experienced pay cuts during the pandemic. Some may be unable to pay out-of-pocket costs for prescribed therapies and prescription drugs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Increased demand for patient support and financial assistance may be on the horizon.

When the pandemic began, many healthcare leaders expected the demand for patient support and financial assistance to grow. Although demand didn't instantly skyrocket, current economic trends suggest that a boom may be imminent. The economic developments creating uncertainty around patient assistance include:

- **The looming stimulus cliff.** Federal stimulus programs may be one reason that demand for patient assistance hasn't been higher. But as time goes on, some unemployment assistance will end. If businesses lay off additional workers, people may have limited access to health insurance coverage.

“Our manufacturer partners are running different scenarios about patient demand and financial exposure so they can prepare for contingencies.”



Corey Ford, Xcenda

Existing patient assistance programs have been modified to address immediate affordability needs.

To help with affordability needs, Lash Group has applied innovative solutions to patient assistance programs. These include the option for 90-day prescription refills, adjusted eligibility requirements, proactively connecting providers and patients with resources, working with patients to explore alternate coverage, and offering virtual injection and administration training.

On the technology front, Lash Group has deployed its existing AI-powered electronic benefit verification solution, as well as a digital assistant that allows automated calls to payers to get benefit information. By automating repetitive tasks, humans can focus on complex cases to help patients.



“We must continue to provide patients the support they need by simplifying access to patient assistance programs and helping patients when they reach out to us.”

Mark Beightol, Lash Group

As practices embrace telehealth, manufacturers’ field support teams must focus on flexibility, collaboration, and communication.

The pandemic has changed how patients receive information about assistance programs, which they generally have low awareness of to begin with. One major hurdle during the pandemic is the significant decline in live person physician visits where patient assistance information has been traditionally disseminated from the clinician.

Office visit volume hasn’t yet recovered to pre-COVID levels. While the number of telehealth visits has grown dramatically, they aren’t fully making up for lost in-office volume. AmeriourceBergen data presented during the webinar shows a decrease in office visits from 40% to 85% across practice specialties.

Figure 1: Overall Telemedicine vs. Office Visit Trends



COVID-19 Weekly Trend Insights, Symphony Health data through 6/19/2020.

The adoption of telemedicine has increased among physician practices, even as patient office visits continue to rebound.



“An opportunity emerging from the pandemic is faster adoption of technology. Patients and providers have accepted solutions in two to three months that normally took two to three years.”

Tommy Bramley, Lash Group

Patient access and reimbursement challenges are greater now than ever. Claims processing has slowed as practices furlough their office staff.

Critical success factors for helping providers overcome access and reimbursement challenges virtually include:

1. **Flexibility.** Xcenda’s field services teams are meeting patients and providers where they are. This means learning to work with staffers in practice offices. Many interactions have shifted to phone, email, and virtual support. Outreach teams are transitioning from paper reimbursement tools to online, downloadable versions. Other helpful tools include safe, secure, and compliant email templates, and CRM platforms that support video interactions.
2. **Collaboration.** Close collaboration is more important than ever, since providers’ offices are short staffed. The goal is to provide outreach and support that will reduce provider fatigue. Manufacturer field teams may want to conduct joint calls to providers. This reduces the provider workload, while delivering high levels of support. It is essential to keep profiles up to date with staffing changes.
3. **Communication.** As field support teams identify trends and issues, they must convey those to clients. For example, practices may want to transition to e-signatures for patients, since wet signatures in offices are no longer practical.



“Looking ahead, field services will continue to provide benefits through technology and virtual support as providers show willingness to engage in new ways for the sake of patients.”

Melissa Mulchahey, Xcenda

SPONSOR'S PERSPECTIVE

The right partner can help manufacturers model and activate changes so that your patient assistance program makes the most impact.

With a mounting need for patient financial services emerging, it will be critical for programs to effectively gauge this demand and have the resources on hand to philanthropically support patients. **Xcenda** can help with an exposure analysis that projects the patient demand for a product and the financial resources needed to provide assistance for a given patient population.

Learn more at xcenda.com

Lash Group has 30+ years of experience designing and delivering patient support programs. In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, Lash Group has been counted on by key partners to help patients start and stay on medications through PAPs and our free-goods pharmacy, TheraCom Pharmacy.

Learn more at lashgroup.com