

WHITE PAPER

Engaging HCPs Throughout the Pharma Brand Lifecycle with Conversational AI



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How can a pharma brand transform their engagement initiatives in a digital way to offer healthcare providers (HCPs) effective, meaningful, and convenient support— and ultimately convert them into brand advocates and loyalists?

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe in early 2020, life sciences and pharmaceuticals organizations were forced to rapidly expand their digital marketing practices in just a few months rather than several years. This recent pandemic is accelerating a much-anticipated, years-long trend toward digital transformation of communication and education engagement tools fueled by social distancing measures and increasing restrictions in place at doctors' offices and hospitals.

In this context, 'digital transformation' is not just about replacing traditional methods like an office visit with digital methods such as a teleconference. Instead, it's a different way of thinking and engaging with stakeholders, customers, target audiences, and beyond. Digital transformation initiatives typically leverage analytics to personalize the user experience by identifying more specific targets, customizing content to those targets' needs and preferences, and delivering the content in the right time and place.

HCPs are still pressed for time as they adjust to this new hybrid care delivery model of in-office and virtual care and communication with their patients. They continue to need new digital patient education tools and point-of-care materials.

This white paper explores how the pandemic-driven shift to a higher volume of remote care in the healthcare industry makes it an optimal time for pharma marketers to offer HCPs personalized brand support through conversational AI.

Use of virtual tools has increased from pre-pandemic levels across the board with video conference calls 20-37%, online chat 24-36%, and apps 17-31%.³

Digital Transformation

The meteoric rise of telehealth is aided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) loosening regulations around HIPAA compliance.² According to a July 2020 Accenture study, use of virtual tools has increased from pre-pandemic levels across the board with video conference calls 20-37%, online chat 24-36%, and apps 17-31%.³

While more HCPs are working digitally than ever before, pharma brands continue to compete to hold their attention in a meaningful way with current and personalized outcomes-focused content. An April 2020 study by AbelsonTaylor and Veeva found that HCPs want more information on clinical trial updates (25%), additional patient support resources (21%) and patient treatment protocols for the post-COVID-19 environment (16%).⁴

With personalization and automation, pharma brands can leverage the power of AI to sift through mountains of data and identify the right HCPs and patients for their therapies. This means falling in line with market sectors who have blazed the trail in this way— such as retail. Consumer retailers and e-commerce sites employ a strong customer support and engagement function, especially if they are selling a complex product or service. Pharma brands are poised to evolve to the point where they are able to provide this kind of online support with the help of conversational AI with chat, IVR, voice, and video functionalities.

“Everyone wants to understand how they use non-personal communication channels to build personal relationships. This is a consumer playbook that was written ten years ago. It's about modernizing it, making it relevant, and making sure that it's palatable inside the regulatory environment.”⁵

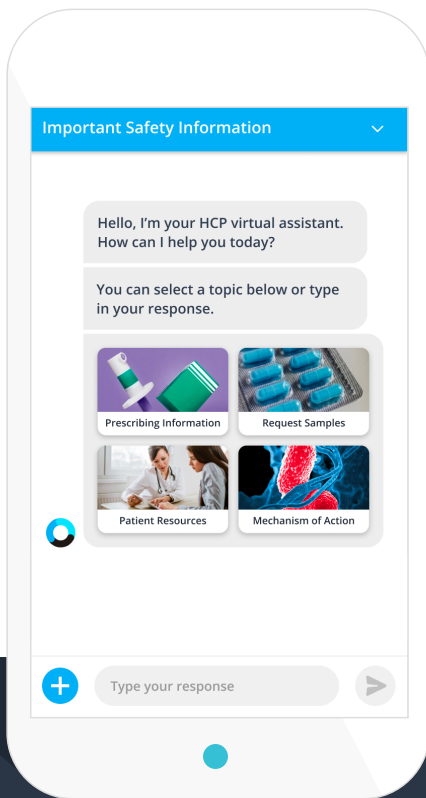
Chris Cullmann,
EVP & GM at RevHealth

Ways Pharma Brands Can Engage HCPs Through Conversational AI

HCPs want to stay engaged with their patients throughout the entire patient journey, including staying abreast of the latest medications, treatments, and therapies.

To be successful in providing HCPs with the information and resources they need, when they need it, and where they need it, pharma brands must make sure that the digital engagement solutions they choose provide a seamless digital experience across channels and platforms. HCPs should be able to easily ask questions about products, request samples, obtain information about clinical trials, or inquire about financial resources for their patients.

HCPs also want a variety of formats. In a May study conducted by AbelsonTaylor and Veeva, HCPs pointed to a range of digital tools that would be helpful, including digital fliers/brochures (45%), virtual chat (36%) and apps (34%).⁶ Pharma brands are providing HCPs with a diverse array of resources to keep their brands and products front and center.



Some of the most important ways conversational AI can support HCPs:

- HCP Awareness/Education With Virtual Assistants
- Patient Monitoring and Education
- Brand Engagement
- Adverse Event (AE) Reporting: Detect, Confirm, and Escalate
- Treatment Adherence
- Clinical Trial Recruitment
- Call Center Triage
- COVID-19 Screeners

HCP Awareness & Education With Virtual Assistants

Pharma reps used to present an e-detailer to doctors with information and statistics on why a brand is effective. Now HCPs are resorting to searching the internet because it is faster than searching through HIPAA-compliant EHRs. But research has shown that Dr. Google is right only a third of the time so they risk being misinformed.⁷

Alternatively, a brand's virtual assistant can answer an HCP's questions on their device of choice, and with the right technologies, enable the right answers to be present in common environments such as Google search. Brands can populate the content, similar to that within an e-detailer, into the virtual assistant and empower the HCP to interactively sift through and seek the information they need through a dynamic chat solution.

With 24/7 availability, pharma brand multi-modal conversational AI capabilities can help HCPs by serving patients between visits with:

- Notifications on new medication promotions
- Sending medication reminders
- Educating and onboarding them if they have a new treatment

• Patient Monitoring and Education

Brand Engagement

As much as it's vital to ensure people have access to information in a timely and relevant way on channels they enjoy, it's just as important to ensure the information you provide is engaging. For example, Humira's Facebook page invites both HCPs and patients to ask questions—and then follows through with answers.⁸ Digital tools such as surveys, quizzes, and games provide both welcome distraction and engaging education.

The current pharmacovigilance process of reporting Adverse Events (AE) is costly to pharma companies.

Pharma companies are required to report serious adverse events within 24 hours and must submit 'alert reports' within 15 calendar days. Most pharmaceutical companies have multiple touch points open to HCPs and patients to report AEs. This requires teams of people monitoring these outlets to detect, confirm, and escalate AEs.

Adverse Event (AE) Reporting: Detect, Confirm, and Escalate

Treatment Adherence

41% of HCPs said they were concerned about patient drug adherence during the pandemic.⁹

- AbelsonTaylor and Veeva

The challenge of treatment adherence has been at an all-time high during the pandemic, partly due to the increase in remote care and changing financial circumstances. A recent Samueli Integrative Health Programs – Harris Poll study found that 55% of patients reported a fear of receiving health care during the pandemic.⁹ In the April 2020 study by AbelsonTaylor and Veeva, 41% of HCPs said they were concerned about patient drug adherence during the pandemic.¹⁰

Financial problems caused by the pandemic have also exacerbated non-adherence. Millions of people in the U.S. have lost their health insurance. Pharma brands can use virtual assistants to let HCPs and patients know about financial support for medications, send them to a financial assistance agent within the pharmaceutical organization, and monitor problems like prescription abandonment.

Social distancing has made tasks like recruiting and retaining clinical trial participants difficult. Government agencies are now allowing remote solutions. The U.S. National Cancer Institute announced on March 23, 2020 that it would allow the investigators of its trials to assess participants remotely where possible.¹¹ To aid in these types of initiatives, virtual assistants powered by conversational AI are able to perform initial screenings and monitor participants as needed.

Clinical Trial Conduct

“This digital expansion will aid research even after the pandemic, I don't know if I would say that the on-site visit is dead. The future is a hybrid; We have to find ways that our data collection and our tools can be so resilient that it doesn't matter if a patient is choosing a visit at home, in the clinic, at the office, in the car, or wherever they may be.”¹²

Craig Lipset,
Clinical Innovation Partners
Advisor & Clinical Trial Innovator

When HCPs and patients have questions, call centers are presumably an option, but they are overburdened with cumbersome and potentially irrelevant FAQs to the extent that urgent calls may not be routed correctly in a timely way. According to Elise Whitaker, VP of Customer Success at Orbita, about 20 or 30% of FAQs actually cover 80% of all questions that go to a call center. “A virtual assistant can triage those FAQs through either IVR or a chat bot and save a pharmaceutical company anywhere from \$65 to \$72 per question. That's a massive annual cost savings.”¹³

• Call Center Augmentation

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Additional features and functionalities that pharma brands can offer HCPs through conversational AI-powered virtual assistants:

- Answers to FAQs around dosing and administration
- Efficacy Data
- Clinical Information
- Prescribing Information
- Support for Patients
- Video Resources
- Additional Indication Information
- Satisfaction Surveys

Only 34% of HCPs surveyed said they would meet with pharma reps before 2021.¹⁴ Two-thirds of HCPs plan to continue using telemedicine and screening patients.

New Normal for HCP Brand Support

Due to social distancing measures, pharma sales reps are not expected (or able) to visit medical offices anytime soon. In June 2020, InCrowd found only 34% of HCPs surveyed said they would meet with pharma reps before 2021.¹⁴ The survey also found that two-thirds of HCPs plan to continue using telemedicine and screening patients.

Post-pandemic, HCPs may adopt a hybrid model. In-person office visits may remain the norm for annual physicals, diagnosing new ailments, oncology treatment, counseling, and new patient starts. Telemedicine may become standard for routine follow-ups or medication review.

HCPs are always going to need personalized education, onboarding tools, and new point-of-care materials. Pharma marketers can offer a comprehensive conversational AI platform that integrates multiple data sources. This will give HCPs a view of their patient's journeys, from when the therapy is prescribed to when it is accessed.

Empower HCPs to self-serve by providing on-demand, 24/7 information through conversational search to reach them when they're 'ready' and where they want to access information

[Learn how](#) your organization can simplify the 'content search' experience within brand websites, enable a reciprocal chat experience where an HCP can quickly ask a specific question and receive the information on-demand.

Orbita's pharma HCP Brand Support solutions:

- Provide 24/7 feedback when call centers are not open/ agents are not available
- Simplify and make the search process more interactive with conversational search
- Decrease call center volume by assisting with frequently asked questions by making content more available in a format that HCPs prefer

With this new normal, pharma brands will adapt to new ways of connecting with HCPs using traditional and emerging digital tools. Says Shwen Gwee, "I think you're going to see a lot more interest in the digital solution platforms. Especially digital medicines and digital therapeutics because these are inherently built in a way that is going to be part of what you normally have on you, whether it's your phone or your watch, a mechanism by which we can collect data, provide recommendations, and also help you care and manage your disease."¹⁶

About Orbita

Orbita provides market-proven voice and chat solutions for healthcare and life sciences sectors, and the most powerful conversational AI platform enabling entities to cost-effectively create and manage HIPAA-compliant virtual health assistants for the enterprise. Organizations tap the power of Orbita's voice search-enabled technologies for consumer marketing, customer service, patient engagement, outcomes improvement and cost reduction initiatives. Customers include Amgen, Brigham and Women's Hospital, ERT, Libertana Home Health, Mayo Clinic, Merck and University of Chicago Medicine. Partners included Amazon, Cognizant, Deloitte, Pariveda, and ServiceNow.

See Orbita's HCP Brand Support Solutions in action

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