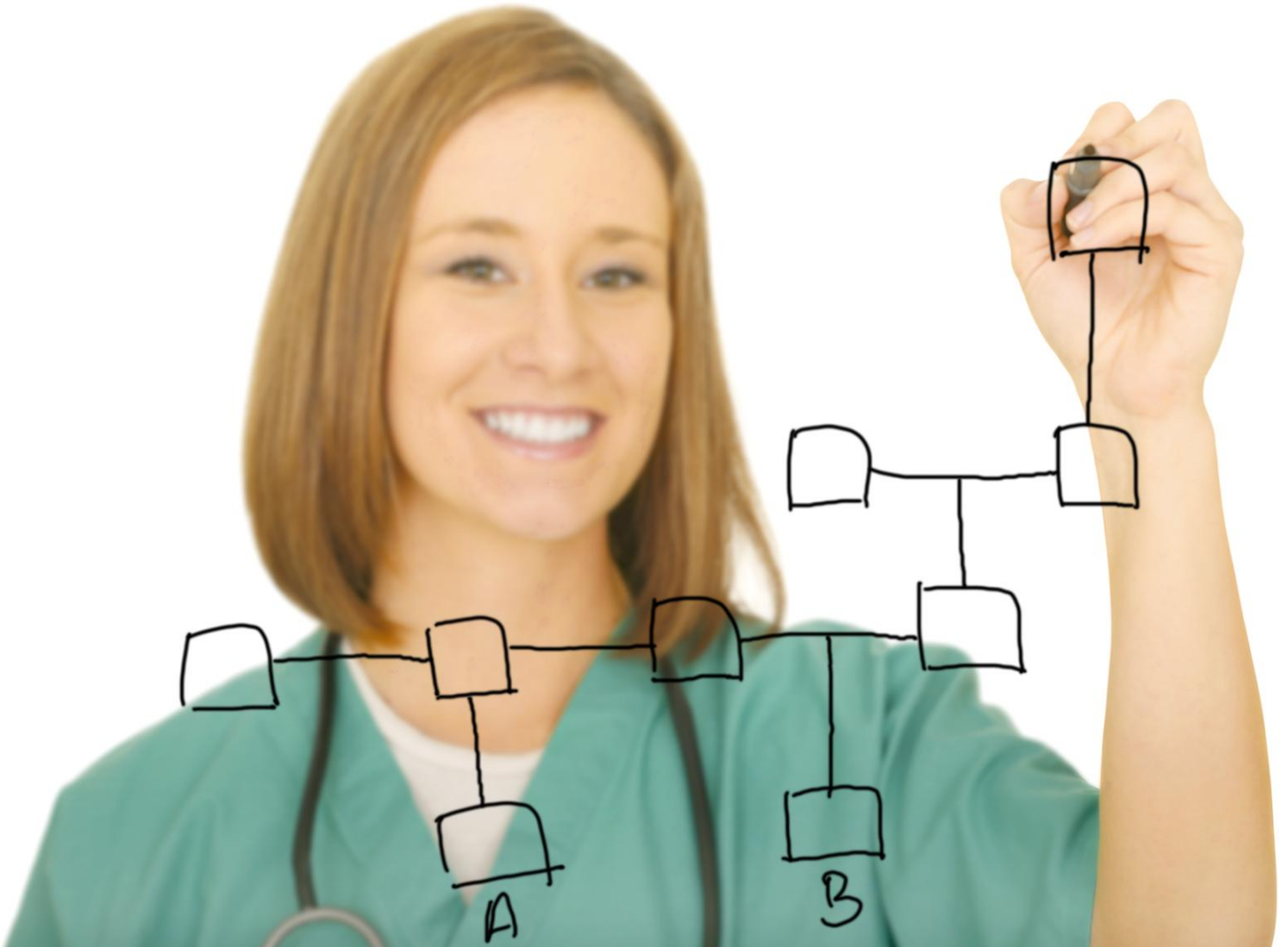


Mapping the Patient Experience



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Patient Experience Mapping

When it comes to building trusted health brands, some elements are key to attracting patients: seamless access, strong medical outcomes, advanced technologies, and delivering a consistently exceptional customer experience. But what constitutes an exceptional experience? One way to find out is through a comprehensive experience mapping process, such as the one undertaken by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS), Ann Arbor, MI, starting with its world-class Skin Cancer program.

Mapping for Insights

Staff, patients, and referring physicians used a visual “experience map” as a guide to understanding and evaluating the total patient experience. Because the patient experience is so complex, the map focuses on three types of touchpoints: personal interactions, equipment and facilities, and written communications (including web-based). With the map providing context, in-depth interviews were conducted with 50 patients, 21 referring physicians, and 54 faculty and staff members.

The intent was to understand the nature of the current experience and unearth the functional and emotional needs of each of these audiences at every stop of the patient journey. What emerged was a visual representation of the ideal patient experience, the primary stewards of that experience, and the touchpoints involved (see figure 1).

The interviews yielded powerful patient audio clips that enable staff to understand exactly how their behavior impacts the overall patient experience. These authentic patient stories can also be shared externally in ads and other communication to tap into the emotional needs of skin cancer patients with the goal of attracting new patients to the UMHS program.

Mapping for Action

The assessment revealed many positives as well as some opportunities for improvement. Patients and referring physicians alike appreciated the patient-centered culture. The personal attention given by UMHS doctors and nurses quickly alleviated any concerns patients had about the size of the institution. And physicians noted that the excellent treatment, along with the considerable efforts to keep them informed and valued members of the care team, motivated them to refer patients to the program.

Opportunities that emerged included providing better information to assist out-of-town patients and improving patient focus for melanoma patients, whose treatment plans are more complex than those for dermatology patients. To address these opportunities, a cross-functional team of nurses, physicians, and other staff members recommended and implemented the following important changes:

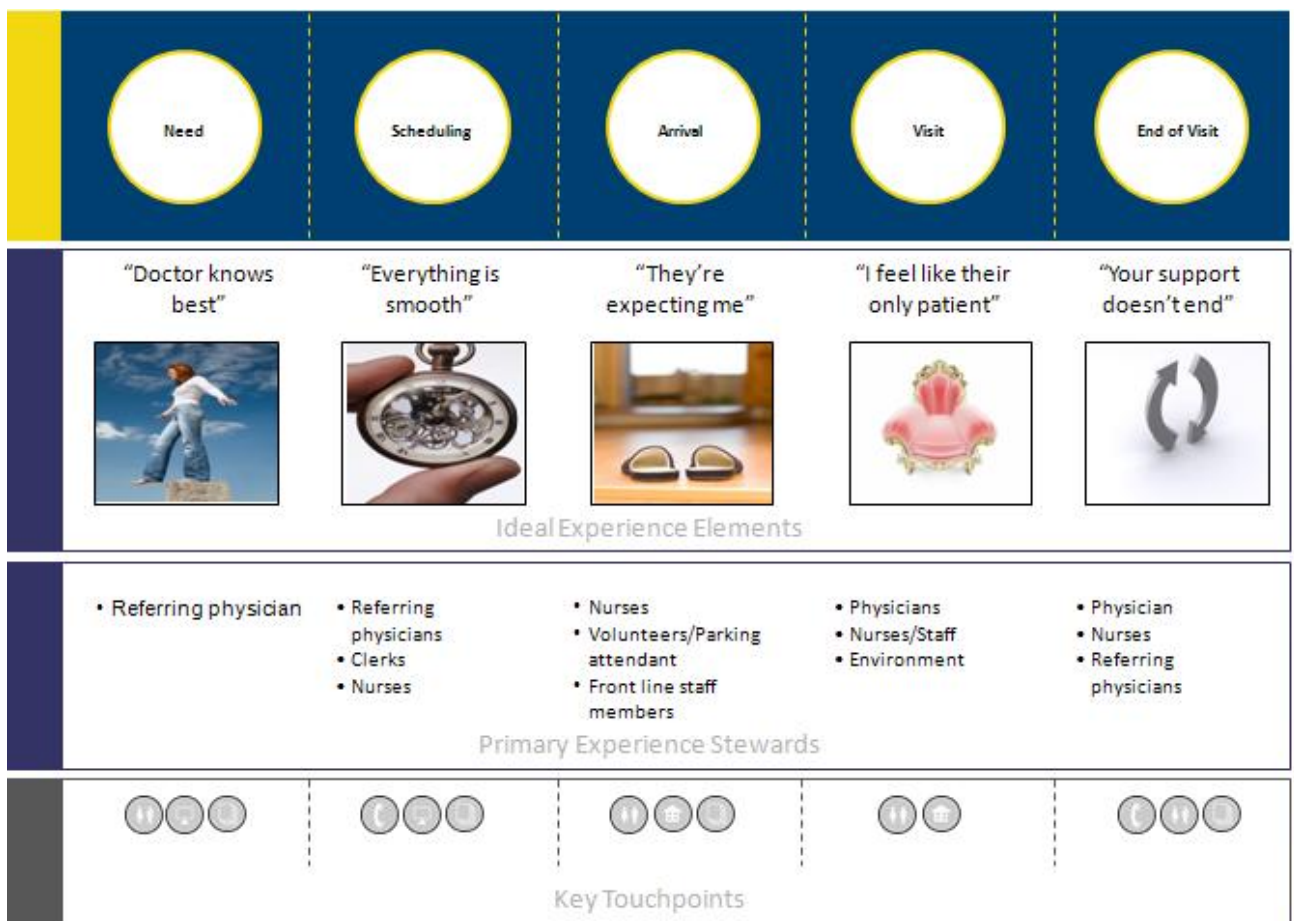
- A consistent phone script for routing patients
- Improvements to the registration process to flag out-of-town patients in scheduling, billing, and medical records systems

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- A feedback mechanism to ensure that each patient case is reviewed for quality assurance, lessons learned, and upgrades needed to further refine the program.

The success of experience mapping and management in the Skin Cancer program has made believers out of UMHS executives, physicians, and staff. So much so, in fact, that UMHS is expanding the approach to six additional programs. The goal is to capitalize on existing centers of excellence by adding the factor to exceptional customer service – and turn referring physicians and their patients into the program’s best advocates.

Figure 1. Skin Cancer Program – Patient Experience



About the Authors

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About Gelb

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Gelb is here to help you understand the complexities of your market to develop and implement the right strategies. We use advanced research techniques to understand your market, strategic decision frameworks to determine the best deployment of your resources, and technology to monitor your successes.

For over 40 years, we have worked with marketing leaders on:

- Strategic Marketing
- Brand Building
- Customer Experience Management
- Go to Market
- Product Innovation
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