

# Duke Health

## Duke Smoking Cessation Success Story

### » CHALLENGE

According to the CDC, cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, 14% of all adults in the U.S. currently smoked cigarettes and many of them wanted to quit smoking.<sup>2</sup>

It's difficult to quit smoking cigarettes. And it's a big challenge to help people quit. A big challenge for health systems is getting those people who need help quitting to enroll in smoking cessation programs.

Duke Health tackled this problem through a tried-and-true strategy: personalization. Healthcare consumers, just like retail consumers, respond strongly to personalized messaging.<sup>3</sup> To increase engagement in their smoking cessation program, Duke offered patients individualized health content in the right format at the right time.

Cigarette smoking causes nearly

**1 IN 5**



**U.S. DEATHS**

per year.<sup>1</sup>

## » SOLUTION

For Duke, the answer was a multipronged educational approach embedded within the health system's digital strategy. Duke's plan included custom and standard education in both print and digital formats. This education was offered before, during, and after each patient's interaction with the health system. Duke also automated some of the outreach, allowing higher-touch communication with those who needed it, and adjusted interaction with those who didn't.

### The strategy included:


#### Automated outreach.

Prompted by scheduled appointments, Duke's system scanned patient charts for "current smoker" status. Patients with "smoker" status automatically received outreach based on their contact preferences electronically via Xealth.

- Patients who preferred digital contact received a video highlighting the benefits of the Duke Smoking Cessation Program in the Digital Care section of MyChart. The video contained a call-to-action card: when interested patients clicked the card, Xealth generated an alert to the clinical team indicating that the patient requested to be contacted with further information on how to schedule a visit.

OVER  
**1,000**  
PATIENTS

requested information  
after receiving an  
automated message.



#### Discharge summaries.

For patients who use tobacco and were admitted to Duke University Hospital, Duke automatically attached Duke-branded Healthwise content to their discharge summaries. Duke also included advice on how to quit smoking, content about the Duke Smoking Cessation Program, and contact information for self-referral.

#### MyChart education.

To simplify patient access to information, Duke included an easy-to-use hyperlink in patient emails. The link brought patients directly to MyChart's Digital Care Center, which contained information specific to conditions identified in their charts.

## » BENEFITS

Duke increased patient activation by offering health information via a patient's preferred interaction options. And the automated distribution saved Duke time in delivering patients Healthwise and custom education. As a result, Duke saw a marked increase in patient engagement with the smoking cessation program.

By combining their digital education with standard outreach through electronic health records (EHR), Duke was able to:

- Reduce demands on clinicians to undertake manual patient outreach.
- Reach patients via their preferred contact method. (Some patients wanted written content, while others preferred videos).
- Provide content in a central location that patients can access at any time: the patient's digital care section.

Partnering with Healthwise allowed Duke to:

- Save time by combining prewritten, medically reviewed Healthwise content with homegrown content.
- Offer consistent content across MyChart, discharge summaries, and digital outreach platforms due to Healthwise's integration into Duke's Xealth digital health platform.

## » RESULTS

Duke's strategy significantly increased the success rate of its smoking cessation program and boosted patient participation:

- 30%–35% success rate (10 times the unassisted success rate!)  
—Jillian Dirkes, LCSW, Program Manager, Duke Smoking Cessation Program.
- Over 1,000 patients requested information after receiving an automated message.

Encouraged by the success of their smoking cessation program strategy, Duke is exploring additional ways to streamline patient and clinician engagement through digital education. They are currently leveraging a similar automated messaging strategy for patients with back pain, overdue mammograms, pre-op education for hip and knee replacements, and provider introduction videos.



– Jillian Dirkes, LCSW, Program Manager,  
Duke Smoking Cessation Program

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/next-generation-member-engagement-during-the-care-journey>

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