

# Building a better patient care experience with AI:

How the right contact center technology can enhance engagement along the patient's journey.

# Introduction

The pandemic has permanently changed the way patients engage with their care. Not only do patients have more options to access care – at health systems, pharmacies, telehealth and more – but they also increasingly expect a tailored and streamlined patient experience.

They're also willing to shop around to get it: Patients currently split their care across four or five provider networks annually,<sup>1</sup> and organizations that can't deliver an exceptional patient experience risk being left behind.

Patients want to work with healthcare organizations that understand them and can anticipate their needs," said Lisa Granger, Customer Experience & Digital Solutions Specialist at Webex by Cisco. "If you make it easy to reach out and communicate, you'll deepen the relationship and create a loyal patient who might stay with you for life."

However, while many healthcare organizations have looked to technology for help delivering the seamless and personalized experience patients expect, many still struggle to get it right. More than four in five patients, for instance, cite poor communication as the worst part of the healthcare experience<sup>2</sup> – even though communication is one area where AI is best positioned to help.

Put simply, relying on legacy solutions – or siloed technologies – to manage patient communication undermines your ability to connect meaningfully with patients, which erodes patient loyalty and trust in your brand. To deepen patient relationships, healthcare organizations must reimagine the contact center with an integrated, AI-driven solution created with the end-to-end patient journey in mind.

The right contact center solution makes it easy for patients to reach out to healthcare providers – whether they need clinical or nonclinical assistance – and reduces friction to keep patients engaged in their care. It offers internal benefits, too, boosting agents' productivity while reducing the risk of burnout.

In this guide, we'll delve into the growing role for AI in the contact center, and how finding the right AI-powered contact center solution can help organizations reach their operational goals – from streamlining the patient experience to reducing staff burnout and more. Finally, we'll share strategies for providers to make sense of the contact center solutions on the market and select the best one to meet their needs.



# Keep patients engaged in their care with proactive communications

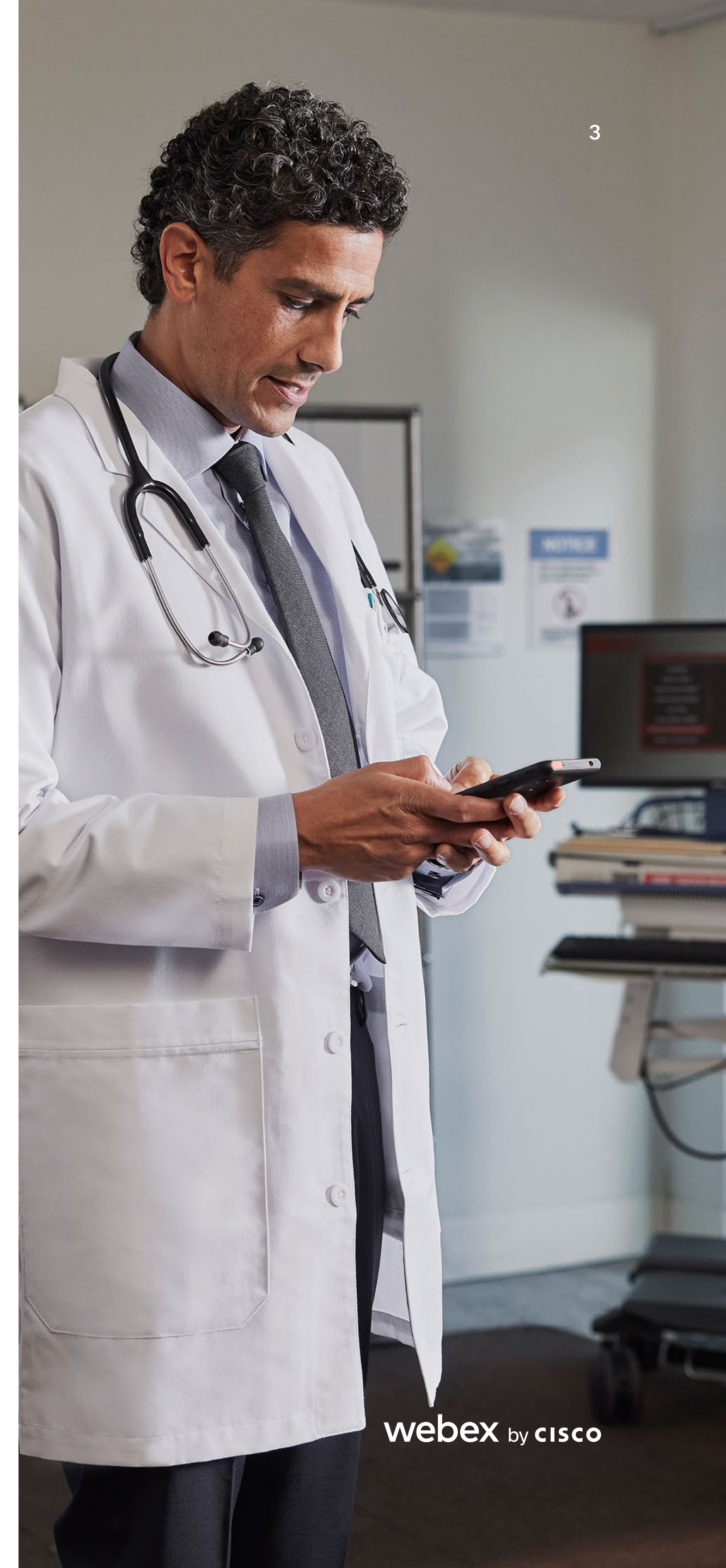
A patient's care experience starts from the first interaction with your organization, and the contact center gives your organization an opportunity to start meeting patients' needs from the first interaction.

"Currently, a lot of healthcare organizations rely on solutions that only allow them to send generic communications to patients," Granger said. "They might get a standardized nudge about an upcoming appointment, but there's no branding for the healthcare organization and no personalization. It can almost feel spammy."

With AI-driven, integrated contact center technology, healthcare organizations can send personalized, two-way communications tailored to patients' needs. Instead of a general reminder about a coming appointment – with no ability to adjust the booking or ask questions ahead of the appointment – patients can manage their booking directly, reducing the risk of no-shows.

Tailored communications can also encourage patients to engage in their care, Granger said. Lots of healthcare organizations are missing out on revenue by not proactively reaching out to

patients – for example, to book their annual flu shot. With contact center technology that allows for patient-level personalization, organizations can reach the right patient at the right time with wellness messages tailored to their needs.



# Strengthen the patient care experience with self-service

Today's patients expect support anytime, anywhere – and offering 24/7 access to self-service is a must. "Patients expect to get instant responses to their queries, but these interactions also need to feel natural. No one wants to feel like they're talking to a bot," explained Jim Ells, Contact Center Sales Specialist at Webex by Cisco.

That's where a contact center solution that includes intelligent automation capabilities can help. AI-powered virtual agents can answer simple patient queries – for example, guiding patients through checking the outstanding

balance on a bill, directing visitors to relevant resources from a knowledge base and allowing patients to complete simple tasks, such as booking or rescheduling appointments – without the need to speak to an agent.

As a result, patients are more likely to get the assistance they need quickly – and be able to go on with their day.



# Ease the transition between self-service and human engagement

Of course, self-service alone cannot resolve every patient query. But an AI-powered contact center solution can lay the groundwork for agents to resolve issues quickly to boost patient satisfaction while reducing the burden on the support team.

“One of the most annoying aspects of the patient experience is getting bounced from agent to agent until you’re able to get the help you need,” Ells explained. “Patients expect the agent to already know why they’re contacting you and be ready to offer assistance – without having to explain their problem over and over again.”

These frustrations have further increased as patients increasingly crave access to different types of expertise through the contact center, which often requires nurses or other clinical personnel to step into an agent-like role. Patients will no longer tolerate navigating through layers of nonclinical support, for example, to connect with a member of their care team for clinical assistance, Ells explained. They expect to connect directly to the appropriate subject matter expert (SME).

AI-powered contact center technology allows healthcare organizations to identify the right SME from the start by gathering patient information ahead of a call. Through a series of screening questions, the technology can parse patients’ answers to identify their likely journey and locate the most appropriate person to offer support, whether that’s an agent, a nurse or another care provider.

Then they can help a SME hit the ground running by compiling a summary of that information when connecting the call.

“The SME can see everything within a single platform: Why the patient is calling, what they’ve already tried and what their next step is likely to be,” Ells said. “As a result, they can jump right into offering meaningful support. They’re not stuck de-escalating the situation with a frustrated caller who had to start the conversation by repeating their journey.”

# Resolve queries quickly by streamlining workflows

As healthcare continues to face a staffing shortage, organizations must find ways to help their agents work more efficiently – without inducing burnout or sacrificing support.

“A lot of the calls coming into the contact center are for mundane issues, like rescheduling appointments,” Granger said. “If you can allow patients to handle those simple queries via self-service, that frees up the more expensive resource – your agents – to do meaningful work that truly requires a human touch.”

And AI-powered technology can help make each patient-to-agent interaction a success. As a baseline, it allows staff to seamlessly transition across multiple channels – text, voice, chat, email and more – when assisting a patient, depending on the type of support they need.

The right technology can also enhance agents’ knowledge. AI can transcribe voice messages and calls in real time, allowing support staff to focus on the patient without the pressure to type every word. It can also allow agents

to pull answers from a knowledge base that is continually updated and optimized with information from other agents so they can solve queries quickly while reducing their cognitive burden during each call.

Finally, AI can prepare a text summary of each call that agents can share with the patient to identify the appropriate next steps, as well as route that information into the appropriate EHR and highlight key action items for the next care provider.

“Agents today are always multitasking, but you can’t be there for patients if you’re still trying to wrap up the previous call,” Granger said. “AI helps free up agents’ ‘mental real estate’ so they can answer patient questions faster and more efficiently, and be there for patients in a meaningful way.”

## Get AI-driven insights into the patient's journey

Recording patient interactions offers the practical benefit of real-time transcription – but it also generates insights that can enhance the patient care experience.

“Analyzing call and interaction histories allows organizations to find gaps where customers are not getting their needs met, so you can identify where you excel and where patient support could

be improved,” Ells said. “You could use that data to create proactive outbound communications to help patients self-serve and preempt the most common reasons customers are having to contact you in the first place.”

## Leverage AI to prevent agent burnout

Burnout plays a key role in healthcare's talent shortage, especially among front-line workers. Nearly one in three direct-care nurses, for example, say they plan to leave their job in the coming year.<sup>3</sup>

As healthcare organizations ask nurses to take on more agent-like roles, it's essential that they also look for strategies to improve the agent-employee experience and reduce workers' stress.

AI-powered contact center technology can help. Not only can it reduce patient frustration and automate tedious tasks – allowing agents to focus on the more fulfilling work of assisting patients – it can

also help organizations monitor agents' performance to look for early signs of burnout.

“Agents will generally keep working even if they're already stressed,” Ells explained. “But an AI-powered contact center can offer performance insights to let you know which agents are taking on an outsized workload and which agents aren't taking enough breaks.”

The technology can also empower agents to manage their stress levels at work – for example, by nudging workers to take breaks throughout the day and building in some buffer time between each call.

# How to find the right contact center solution to enhance the patient care experience

These three strategies can help you evaluate your needs, weigh your options and set your rollout up for success.

## 01

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### Start with an end-to-end look at the patient journey

With more and more AI-powered technologies coming to market, it's easy to get caught up in complex functionality and marketing hype. However, Ells recommended stepping back and honestly looking at what's most important: the patient care experience.

“Think about how patients engage with your healthcare organization and all the sources of friction along their end-to-end journey,” he advised. “So often we see hospitals trying to deploy multiple systems and software for patient communications. These systems often differ across departments, but data isn't shared among them, so you end up with silos that create an inconsistent patient experience.”

Using isolated solutions for virtual agent-based self-service and voice support, for instance, may leave human agents unable to anticipate why a patient is calling them, because they won't receive the necessary context from the virtual agent. Similarly, deploying separate solutions for agents and nursing teams may make it difficult for patients to move from nonclinical to clinical support, and vice versa, necessitating multiple phone calls to resolve each issue.

“If you're using point solutions, you can look for ways to tie each solution back to the contact center,” Ells said. “But the best way to provide seamless service is to find technology that provides end-to-end support for both clinical and nonclinical staff.”





## 02

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### **Look for flexible, cloud-based solutions that maximize long-term ROI**

One of the first decisions you'll make is between an owned and operated on-premises contact center technology or a cloud-based solution. And, while every healthcare organization is different, the cloud is often the best fit, Granger said.

“Moving into the cloud helps future-proof your contact center,” she explained. “Technology changes fast, and it changes constantly. In the cloud, you can get upgraded and expanded capabilities as they're released so you're not constantly playing catch-up.”

Working with a cloud-based solution also offloads the IT lift to help you get the most value from your team, she said. “When your IT workers and business analysts don't need to worry about keeping the platform running, they can become more strategic to identify new trends, pain points and new revenue opportunities to drive innovation.”

Finally, going with a cloud-based technology allows you to bypass much of the upfront IT lift and get the solution up and running quickly – in a matter of days rather than several weeks.

## 03

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### Put security and compliance first

Patient privacy and security should be top of mind when considering any new investment in technology, and the contact center is no exception. “The ideal solution enable your HIPAA- and PCA-compliance, and the vendor should be transparent about the level of security they can offer to you,” Ells said.

The ideal partner will help you keep your finger on the pulse of your data security. “You shouldn’t have to worry about whether your solution is still compliant; the vendor should take continuous steps to show you.”

### Uptime is essential

In healthcare, it’s critical to be there for your patients – and your contact center solution should be there for you. Look for a solution with a demonstrated record of reliability to help ensure you can support your patients when they need you.

**“In 2022, there was a 988 service that came out; a national suicide prevention hotline. Our crisis team was nominated to do that service, so we knew we had to get into the cloud and onto a reliable, stable solution.... We implemented [Webex Contact Center] and had a 99% uptime rate.”**

#### **Jarrett Newberry**

Senior Systems Director,  
Burrell Behavioral Health

# Strengthen the patient care experience with your contact center

As patients' expectations continue to rise, and their journeys become more complex, organizations must harness the power of AI in their contact center to keep up.

Do it well, and organizations can bolster satisfaction by enhancing the patient care experience and boost productivity by helping agents bring their best performance to work. Fail to act, and organizations risk

higher patient attrition and a stressed, burnt-out workforce.

Webex Contact Center can help you support patients at every stage of their journey. It combines proactive communications and convenient self-service with AI assistance so agents can offer seamless, personalized support – and keep patients engaged in their care.

Find out how Webex Contact Center can elevate your patient care experience today.

[Learn more](#)

Sources

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# About Webex

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Webex's flexible approach to AI delivers improved business results while ensuring security and privacy by design. Webex partners with leading technology providers to enhance workflows through a unified application and interface.

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