## CASE STUDY

# UNC REX Healthcare: Making their automatic connections "win-win-win"

UNC REX Healthcare believes that communicating, educating and engaging patients before, during and after a hospital stay helps form lifelong patient relationships and strengthens its ties with community physician practices. In November 2017 alone, REX made a total of **15,287 automated patient connections** with pregnant and new-parent patients.

**BY THE NUMBERS:**

**15,287**
patient connections
in one month

**3,400**
patients educated
every week

**500%**
instant increase in
connections with API

**51%**
patient engagement
with care messages

REX engages and educates 3,400 patients each week – roughly 65% of all women who deliver at the hospital annually – through interactive care messages, and maintains this patient-provider connection from pregnancy through the child's 3rd birthday. The hospital is also able to connect with an additional 5,000 patients, whose children have surpassed the 3rd birthday mark, at a moment's notice with custom digital messages.

These care messages have an average message open rate of 30% (compared to a healthcare industry average of 22%). The average message engagement rate, (or click rate) is 51% (compared to an industry average of less than 5%), and has been as high as 71.5%.

### REX's Challenge: Reaching its patient population *before* they give birth

As with many hospitals, "*The majority of women delivering at REX are not patients at the hospital until they are there to give birth*," acknowledges Allie Gouveia, digital marketing coordinator at REX.

Allie and her colleagues overcame this challenge in December 2016, with an application programming interface (API) that connects a pre-registration form on the hospital website to its UbiCare SmarteXp patient engagement solution. This solution also allows REX to connect with and educate the majority of their OB patients on their mobile devices, months before they enter the hospital.

Invisible to users, the API is a simple "key" that allows

patients to start receiving REX's care messages at the same time as they fill out the pre-registration form. With the API, the marketing department has enabled hands-free enrollment in digital patient education.

Now, when a patient fills out the pre-registration form, a pre-checked box also automatically enrolls the patient in the hospital's care messages. This method is fully HIPAA-compliant and patients can always uncheck the box if they want.

Prior to implementing the API, patients signed up for REX's patient engagement solution one-by-one, a manual process requiring both patient and staff time. Nonetheless, both appreciated the connection. Patients were opening the messages at a rate of 36%, well above the national average.

Now, says Allie, the process has become "very hands off."

"Once the API was set up, there hasn't been anything else to do," she says. "We had an average of 60 patient signups each month before the API, and now we average 300."

**This represents an immediate 500% increase.**

Upon automating enrollment, some wondered about the effect on patient engagement. The open rates have held steady, showing that all patients are interested in receiving health information from their hospital by email; .they simply did not know how to access it before.

## Connecting with patients throughout the episode has been a "win-win-win"

REX's solution has allowed the hospital to provide a seamless care experience as patients transition from office visits to delivering at the hospital.

Through ongoing surveys that REX uses to evaluate patient satisfaction with their engagement solution, the hospital has found that:

- 80% of patients feel the solution makes them more confident to manage their healthcare

- 85% take better care of themselves

- 90% feel a stronger connection to the hospital

- 95% feel they can take batter care of their child

"We work with community doctors and they've said that their patients have enjoyed getting [our messages]," says Marketing Coordinator Jenny Johnson. "It's a good partnership with the physician offices. It's a win for us, a win for them, and certainly a win for the patients."

**About REX**

REX is a member of the nonprofit, integrated UNC Health Care system owned by the state of North Carolina and based in Chapel Hill, N.C.