Compete Successfully With Cost-Effective Patient Acquisition

Lahey Health drives 11,519 commercial patients with Patient Direct Connect™
“PATIENT DIRECT CONNECT HELPS US OUTSMART THE COMPETITION.”

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Situation

Lahey Health is a nonprofit health system comprising four acute care hospitals — Lahey Hospital & Medical Center, Winchester Hospital, Beverly Hospital, and Addison Gilbert Hospital — that have been serving northeast Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire for 125 years. The system’s 1,400 primary care and specialist physicians provide care for about 2.5 million residents in over 120 municipalities. Massachusetts residents are 2.5 times more likely to seek care from an academic medical center than residents of other states. Consequently, 50% of Massachusetts hospitals have closed in the last 50 years — all of them community hospitals. As a system dedicated to efficient, high-quality care, Lahey Health has two challenges:

1. Compete cost-effectively: The Massachusetts market is competitive and consolidating quickly. To inform the public about Lahey’s locally convenient, quality alternative to large Boston-area teaching hospitals, the health system needs to generate brand awareness and drive business with just 30% of its competitors’ advertising budget.

2. Pursue smart growth: To compete effectively, Lahey must enhance its profile with key consumers and communicate the unique capabilities of its primary care physicians and specialists in targeted and measurable ways.

Lahey tackled these challenges despite being in the middle of the dual implementation of Epic electronic health records and a decision support system. Additionally, the health system had limited internal data available to evaluate marketing and growth strategies.

Key goals

• Generate measurable growth
• Increase commercial payer mix
• Enhance Lahey Health profile among targeted female demographic
• Enrich physician alignment and engagement

Results

NEW PATIENTS’ IN JUST OVER TWO YEARS
• 4,106 patients
• $6.9M contribution margin
• 3.21:1 ROI
• $403 investment per patient
• 32% increase in commercial payer mix

ALL PATIENTS” IN JUST OVER TWO YEARS
• 17,349 total patients
• $50.4M total contribution margin
• 29.43:1 ROI
• $95 investment per patient

* No appointments or encounters in prior 24 months.
** Returning within 24 months (reentry via Patient Direct Connect).

Program dates: September 2014 – April 2017
Solution

The health system recognized the need for an online patient-acquisition solution to acquire patients who might otherwise seek care at an academic medical center. Commercially insured patients search online for medical information more frequently than patients with other insurance.

Lahey Health (then Northeast Health System) first partnered with Healthgrades in 2009 to use the Healthgrades customer relationship management and call center solutions to engage with specific patient populations while generating positive ROI. The health system also promotes its Healthgrades Quality Achievement awards with online messaging. Finally, Lahey has implemented the Healthgrades marketing automation platform to carry on interactive conversations with patients. It integrates these into its CRM database to ensure results’ measurability.

In 2014, Lahey Health launched Patient Direct Connect for employed physicians. It specifically targeted growth with commercially insured and female consumers, because its research demonstrated a lack of resonance with these key Healthgrades demographics. The Healthgrades audience is 68% female, and 76% of it is commercially insured.

Insights

Lahey made several key choices during the program rollout:

Demonstrate benefits to physicians. The health system made a priority of marketing the distinctive capabilities of its physicians by giving them a unique voice and compelling messaging. Beginning with its employed physicians, it:

- Set minimum profile requirements for a Patient Direct Connect campaign launch, focusing on key appointment conversion drivers. This strategy maximized the opportunity to generate traffic and grow patient rosters.
- Shared monthly reports with its physicians on transferred calls, new patients, and appointments, demonstrating tangible program benefits and enriching physician alignment.

Prioritize data integrity. Lahey created a centralized physician database owned by its business development department, which also became its Healthgrades relationship manager. In doing so, it:

- Standardized physician data, optimizing quality control and guaranteeing key information (like practice phone number and address) was updated as frequently as necessary to ensure accuracy.
- Ensured a high physician profile fill rate, including photos and a unique care philosophy to differentiate its providers.

‘2016 Health Management Academy/Healthgrades survey.
In addition, the health system overcame several significant challenges, using a multi-pronged strategy:

**Leverage transparent measurability.** Even though concurrent decision support and Epic electronic health record implementations delayed ROI measurability, Lahey could still see the volume of calls and appointments coming in from the call center. That visibility sustained executive support and maintained confidence despite limited internal data.

**Create organizational awareness of a business development initiative.** Lahey centralized Patient Direct Connect program management within business development and fostered internal alignment among diverse divisions, including:

- Marketing
- Finance
- Physician leadership
- Executive leadership
- Practice managers
- Lahey Health’s internal call center

**Use top-down education to communicate broadly and consistently.** Healthgrades consultants educated practice managers and physicians on program value, including key profile elements that drive consumers to their practices.

### Results

Lahey’s online patient-acquisition program generated a meaningful competitive advantage and measurable growth for its employed physicians.

**MEASURABLE GROWTH**

Over two years, Lahey generated **4,106 unique new patients** through Patient Direct Connect, realizing a **$6.9 million contribution margin** and an **ROI of 3.21:1**. Overall, it saw **17,349 unique patients** through Patient Direct Connect, with a **$50.4 million contribution margin** and a **29.43:1 ROI**.

**INCREASED COMMERCIAL PAYER MIX**

Over the course of the program, **Patient Direct Connect generated a 32% increase in commercial payer mix** for new patients to Lahey Health compared with new patients the health system acquired from other sources. Overall, new patients acquired through Patient Direct Connect reflected a higher-quality payer mix than Lahey Health’s overall population.
ENHANCED PROFILE AMONG TARGETED FEMALE DEMOGRAPHIC

Over the duration of the program, the primarily female Healthgrades audience responded well to Lahey’s engagement efforts. Physician profile conversion rates (the rate of profile views that resulted in a transfer to Lahey Health) grew from 0.61% at the beginning of the program to 2.52% after two years.

*Transferred female callers as a percentage of impressions delivered*
ENRICHED PHYSICIAN ALIGNMENT
Lahey's employed primary care and specialist physicians could clearly appreciate the benefits from participating in Patient Direct Connect. They could see their patient rosters growing in monthly reports on transferred calls, appointments, and patients. The health system provided additional value by educating them on the importance of patient review volume to their position in organic search results.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
Competitive interception, which presents consumers searching for another doctor on healthgrades.com with Lahey Health physicians in comparison, delivered noticeable results: 11,396 click-throughs from consumers viewing competing physicians. Patient Direct Connect also helps Lahey Health track patient encounters, ensuring its marketing generates specific and measurable ROI. Finally, the health system recently expanded the program by offering online appointment scheduling.

Lahey Health competitive interception

Benefit to physicians

31,940
referrals to Lahey Health physicians

15,540
transfers from Healthgrades call center directly to Lahey Health or physician office for appointment

Program to date: September 2016 through April 2017

Conclusion
Lahey Health is actively intercepting its competition online and meeting consumers where they are to demonstrate the unique value of its physicians. By leveraging Patient Direct Connect, the health system has cost-effectively increased targeted patient volumes and demonstrated a positive ROI. This strategy allows it to thrive in a highly competitive environment.

As it continues to see positive results with Patient Direct Connect, Lahey Health has expanded its patient-acquisition program to its affiliated physician groups and implemented Healthgrades online scheduling solutions for employed physician profiles to increase appointments and improve access.
To learn more about how Healthgrades solutions can engage and align patients and physicians, call 855.665.9276 or visit hospitals.healthgrades.com.