

Introduction

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IN THE 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, patient centrality resided in the marketing department of hospitals. “We are patient centric,” the billboards exclaimed. But we were all missing the point. “We” includes providers, insurers, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and even patients. The real question is why healthcare has escaped the consumer revolution these past 30 years and why we are so self-congratulatory when we make baby steps in that direction.

This book explores the why, and more importantly what we can do about it, in a meaningful and data-driven way. It assumes that the “service” we give patients today will be laughable 10 years from now and explores how we can start the revolution toward consumer-centric care. The title and body of this book focus on *consumer* centrality, not patient centrality, because, in our experience, words matter. Patients are sick and need care for their diseases. Consumers expect the kind of service they receive in other industries, regardless of whether they are ill or healthy.

The premise upon which this book is built is that we are going through a once-in-an-era change in healthcare, from a business-to-business model to a business-to-consumer model. In other words, healthcare is in the midst of a shift from a wholesale model, where providers sell themselves to physicians and insurers, to a retail model, where providers sell themselves directly to consumers. Today, employers still make most benefit decisions on behalf

of individuals and their families. Tomorrow, individuals will make decisions about benefits, providers, and their course of care. To put it simply, things change when you are not using OPM (other people's money). The combination of more sophisticated consumers, the popularity of government managed insurance and even "Medicare for All," the need to be bold and think differently or go bankrupt, and the rise of high-deductible plans on the commercial side will move the system from a "house money" mentality to one in which consumers make decisions the same way they do in other aspects of their lives—namely, with an "it's my money" mentality.

Once we make the leap from physician and administrator as the boss to patient as the boss, everything changes. The healthcare ecosystem moves from hospital companies or insurance companies to consumer healthcare entities. The writers of this book recognize that now is the time to actualize the pioneering work done by Harvey Picker and the Picker Institute, as described in *Through the Patient's Eyes*. That work changed my perspective as a physician and led to my desire to run a large healthcare system through the consumers' eyes.

Any business CEO will tell you that failing to be consumer centric is the biggest threat to survival. Transformative businesses such as Amazon, Netflix, Uber, Apple, and Airbnb would not exist if the retail industry, Blockbuster, the taxi industry, the music industry, or the hotel industry had realized that bad customer service, ridiculous fees, and limited availability and pricing options have a short shelf life in our age of acceleration. In *Unscaled*, Hemant Taneja (2018) discusses how technology coupled with economics is unraveling behemoth industries—including corporations, banks, farms, media conglomerates, energy systems, governments, and schools—that have long dominated business and society. Size and scale have become a liability.

What happens when you begin to look through the consumer's eyes? For a start, ask them. A recent unpublished survey of patients

at Jefferson Health asked if healthcare was like other aspects of life, and their passion and near consensus were somewhat surprising:

- 71 percent expect physicians to have online scheduling with comparative rates.
- 65 percent expect that there will be social networking opportunities to discuss health-related topics and compare providers.
- 92 percent expect to have full two-way electronic communication with their providers.
- 83 percent expect that they will be able to access all their patient information as they do their bank accounts online.
- 78 percent expect to have total access to family members' inpatient charts and that they will be able to participate in rounds in-person or virtually.

Through the consumer's eyes, healthcare is not that complicated. People want a seamless, personalized experience where technology such as genomics and augmented intelligence is used in a way that gives them more control over their disease or their health; where physicians are not "captains of the ship" but partners in health; and where they are understood and treated as human beings with emotional needs in addition to their physical needs. Hospitals should not be imposing places where hospitality is forgotten, and insurers should not be barriers between the patient and provider. As you read this book, you will realize that the market forces of consumer-centeredness, new definitions of patient satisfaction, reduction of OPM, rise of the millennial factor (namely, technology over blind loyalty), and an increasing buyer's market with more options will lead to a future where those of us in the healthcare ecosystem must meet the needs of patients to consume healthcare in the same flexible manner in which they consume every other consumer good.

As the leader of a large healthcare system, I will live or die based on our care and caring, not our location or bricks and mortar. Former Apple CEO John Sculley admonished us to stop using terms like *telehealth*, stating that we don't talk about *telebanking* (oral communication, July 2017). Banking and finance have morphed from an industry where everything was done at the bank to one where more than 80 percent of banking is done at home or remotely with a variety of technologies.

Viewing the healthcare revolution from the consumer's eyes involves taking a leap into what will be obvious 10 years from now and doing it today. Not only is this the right thing to do for your patients, but it's also great business. Guide consumers by giving them the information they need to make good decisions about their health. Simply put, consumers who are disengaged in their own healthcare are often unsatisfied and drive up costs. Find convenient ways for consumers to connect with your healthcare ecosystem. Amazon, Target, and Walmart recognize that they need to connect with consumers even when they are not in the store. Most of all, inspire loyalty by learning from the success of other consumer-facing industries; demonstrate value, especially with respect to a patient's own money; give consumers a single point of contact; and create a seamless experience across the continuum.

As you read this book, view it as a guidepost for an optimistic future—a future in which healthcare does not have an address, but one where consumers and providers partner together to create healthier communities. That goal is attainable. *You* have the power to change the current dynamics. This book can serve as the beginning of the journey.

REFERENCE

Taneja, H., with K. Maney. 2018. *Unscaled: How AI and a New Generation of Upstarts Are Creating the Economy of the Future*. New York: Public Affairs.