How MedStar Health is Using Tonic to **Streamline the Patient Intake Process**
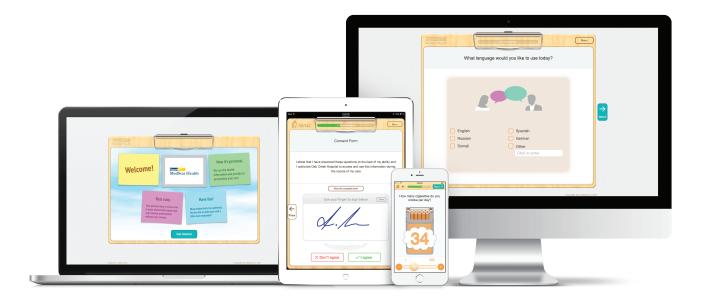
The Problem

Ambulatory clinics at MedStar's Georgetown University Hospital were administering patient intake forms by mailing out paper versions to patients in advance and then using traditional clipboards in the office upon arrival. The challenges with this approach included:

- **Extremely low completion rates** of paper forms that were mailed out in advance of an appointment, slowing down the workflow in the waiting room.

- **Long rooming times** since clinicians had to wait for patients to complete all the paperwork upon arrival: *"paper forms create big delays for us."* This also resulted in each clinic having fewer appointment slots it could fill each day, restricting MedStar's revenue capacity.

- **Poor data accuracy**: *"many times we can't read a patient's handwriting — it can be really difficult to decipher."* This meant critical information was often not getting recorded or recorded inaccurately.

- **High labor costs**: front desk staff were spending more than half their time on administrative tasks associated with manual check-in.

- **Cumbersome patient experience**: patients were being asked to fill out the same paper forms over and over, even when visiting the same clinic again.

- **Missed care opportunity**: the care experience was impacted because providers often did not have time to review self-reported intake data before starting the clinical evaluation.

The Solution

Switching to Tonic, MedStar was able to solve for these critical challenges and more:

- **Intake forms are sent out electronically** via email to patients prior to appointment, dramatically boosting completion rates and reducing rooming times. And patient verification is done within the survey itself: there are no usernames, no passwords, and nothing to log into. Patients simply click on a link.

- **Upon arrival, returning patients are handed an iPad** with their previously collected data pre-populated, meaning that patients never need to answer the same questions twice ever again.

- **The collected data goes directly into Cerner** (MedStar's EHR) and IDX (practice management system) in real time rather than having to scan or manually enter the data. Clinicians have the information when and where they need it, improving care delivery.

- **An intuitive and friendly survey design** accommodates different literacy and education levels, creating much higher data accuracy and a better patient experience.

- **Real-time reporting** on intake form compliance allows front desk staff to see which patients have completed which forms and when.

"Our patients feel as if we are working behind the scenes to plan for them. They now have the feeling when they arrive at our clinic that 'you already know me.' And on our side, we DO know them before they arrive for that first appointment."

Operations Director, MedStar GUH

The Results

85%
completion rate among patients that receive their forms prior to visit

25min
average amount of time saved for checking in new patients

9 out of 10
average patient satisfaction rating of Tonic (n=25,000+)

50%
reduction in front desk staff time

More Accurate Patient Data

- 85% of patients who receive their forms electronically complete them prior to the visit.

- Dramatic increase in the collection of critical demographic data (such as emergency contact info) and clinical data (such as allergies) — and all with much less data error.

- Significant improvement in patient portal registrations since staff have much more accurate patient information.

Supercharged Patient Experience

- Tonic has received an average score of 9 out of 10 in terms of patient satisfaction (n= 25,000+ submissions). No more paperwork, no more clipboards, no more mailing forms!

- Patients feel as though they are getting more advanced care at MedStar: *"Tonic gives our practice a modern feel — patients love it. The flow of the intake is very simple and easy to follow."*

- Patient care is improved: less time spent on paperwork means more face-to-face time spent with clinicians.

Huge Cost Savings

- Tonic has reduced rooming times of new patients by an average of 25 minutes since there is no paperwork to complete and any potential care issues can be triaged ahead of time. *"Tonic helps our doctors stay ahead and move through the appointment more efficiently."*

- Front desk staff time has been reduced by 50%, allowing MedStar to redeploy this staff to higher value tasks and creating a better patient experience. At a fully staffed clinic, this time savings can equal up to one full time receptionist.

- Rooming time reduction has also allowed MedStar to create more patient appointments, increasing the revenue capacity of each clinic.

What's Next

Based on its success, MedStar is now planning to expand the use of the Tonic platform to additional ambulatory clinics through its network, as well as add consent form completion to the intake process.

About MedStar Health:

$5 billion net revenue

150+ ambulatory clinics

4+ million outpatient visits

30,000+ employees

10 hospitals, including Georgetown University Hospital

MedStar Health