



The Point of Care Ecosystem: Building Your Connected Point of Care Ecosystem

Point of Care Ecosystem Series Part Four



Before embarking on any construction project, it is always a good idea to have a set of blueprints or a detailed plan to guide progress and ensure alignment with objectives. Building a connected point of care ecosystem within your ambulatory setting should be no different. This white paper helps healthcare organizations assess where they are in the journey to creating a connected ecosystem and provides a framework that can be used to achieve better healthcare experiences and outcomes.

The Need for a Connected Ecosystem

The importance of a connected point of care ecosystem in ambulatory care cannot be overstated. For an environment that still experiences disparate systems and isolated interactions, a connected ecosystem integrates processes, equipment and caregivers to enhance patient and caregiver experiences and improve the quality of care.

The patient-centered approach fostered by a connected ecosystem helps healthcare organizations develop a balanced methodology that addresses the four pillars of the Quadruple Aim: patient experience, population health, cost of care and provider satisfaction. It also provides a platform where organizations can leverage new technologies, incorporate best practices and employ greater standardization to improve care and outcomes.

Healthcare organizations that begin building a fully connected point of care ecosystem are better positioned for success as the industry continues to move toward value-based payment models. The connected ecosystem plays a valuable role in any Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) strategy by providing a basis for achieving specific Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) quality metrics used in calculating provider payment.

For more information on the connected point of care ecosystem, visit the Midmark [content and news library](#).



Connected Point of Care Ecosystem Journey



There is no single common starting point for all healthcare organizations when it comes to building a connected point of care ecosystem. It is not a linear journey, with one specific step leading to the next specific step. Most of today's healthcare organizations are at different places in the journey. Some are just starting, while others have been on the journey for a few years and may not have even realized it.

Changes in the healthcare industry (e.g., shifting demographics, technology advances, value-based reimbursement) are driving caregivers to evolve the way they examine, diagnose, treat and interact with patients. Organizations are integrating electronic medical records (EMR), creating patient-centered exam rooms and gathering real-time data to address bottlenecks in the flow of patient visits. These actions are all designed to implement a patient-centered approach within ambulatory care. They are also part of the journey to a connected ecosystem. For a more comprehensive list of steps along the journey, view [Midmark Connected Ecosystem Checklist](#).

The remainder of this paper focuses on five steps healthcare organizations can take to assess where they are in the journey and develop a framework to achieve a connected point of care ecosystem. These steps are:

1. Identify your point of care ecosystem
2. Establish benchmarks for success
3. Conduct an assessment of your ecosystem
4. Set realistic and measurable goals
5. Make necessary changes

Identify Your Point of Care Ecosystem

The point of care ecosystem can encompass everything that happens within the practice or clinic, as well as patient touch points and experiences occurring outside this environment. These touch points include any interactions, equipment, room layout, technology and processes. Every ecosystem is different and complex, so it's important your care team agrees on the components and actions that comprise your ecosystem.

Begin by listing all the pieces and parts of your point of care ecosystem with input and approval from your care team. Once the list is complete, study the activities and work being done within that ecosystem. Identify stakeholders/clinicians who have responsibilities at the point of care and determine their roles.

While holistically viewing the point of care as an interdependent, integrated system can help you more easily identify barriers and opportunities, it may make more sense to initially limit the focus to certain areas of the ecosystem (e.g., patient rooming, exam room design, equipment). This is a decision that you and your team will need to make as you review the completed list and consider priorities, concerns and immediate opportunities.



Establish Benchmarks for Success

The good news is that most healthcare organizations already are journeying toward a connected ecosystem. Some of the journeys are further along or more formalized than others. This is an opportunity to gather industry information that can help you understand approaches and strategies that are working. There are a variety of sources for benchmark information, case studies and best practices. A good place to start is with your current vendor. In some cases, they can provide valuable counsel throughout this entire journey.

Once you've gathered industry benchmarks and best practices, you are ready to build on the information gathered in step 1 and look further inward. Identify pain points, inconsistencies and waste occurring within your point of care ecosystem. Discuss with your care teams the aspirations for your facility and ecosystem, and then prioritize focus areas for action. Finally, use the industry and internal information to identify relevant metrics for success.

Conduct an Assessment of Your Ecosystem

An assessment of your ecosystem will help you understand its current state and “health,” providing a starting point so you can find the best path forward. When beginning your assessment, it is helpful to think of the ecosystem as a set of concentric circles with the point of care in the center (Figure 1).

Start at the center of the circle (point of care) and work your way out as necessary. Talk with patients and clinicians about their experience. How do they think the space is performing? What’s important to them and why? What do they think is working or not working? What are the main areas that need to be addressed? Next, take a look at the equipment, technology, processes and workflows being used in your ecosystem to determine what is working, what needs to be evolved and/or what is missing.

Once you have gathered this information, follow patients and caregivers as they move through your ecosystem to see how actual experiences vary from perception. Are processes/workflows being followed? How do caregivers interact with patients? How do caregivers interact with the technology? Are there connectivity issues? Are patients spending too much time in the waiting room or at one particular station? Are there accessibility issues within the rooms or facility?

Finally, share the assessment results with your care teams for feedback. This time can also be used to educate them on the state of your ecosystem and get their buy-in and support on possible needed changes uncovered by the assessment. Elicit feedback on priorities and important/necessary steps in the journey. You can also identify stakeholders to play a role in developing goals and overseeing initiatives.

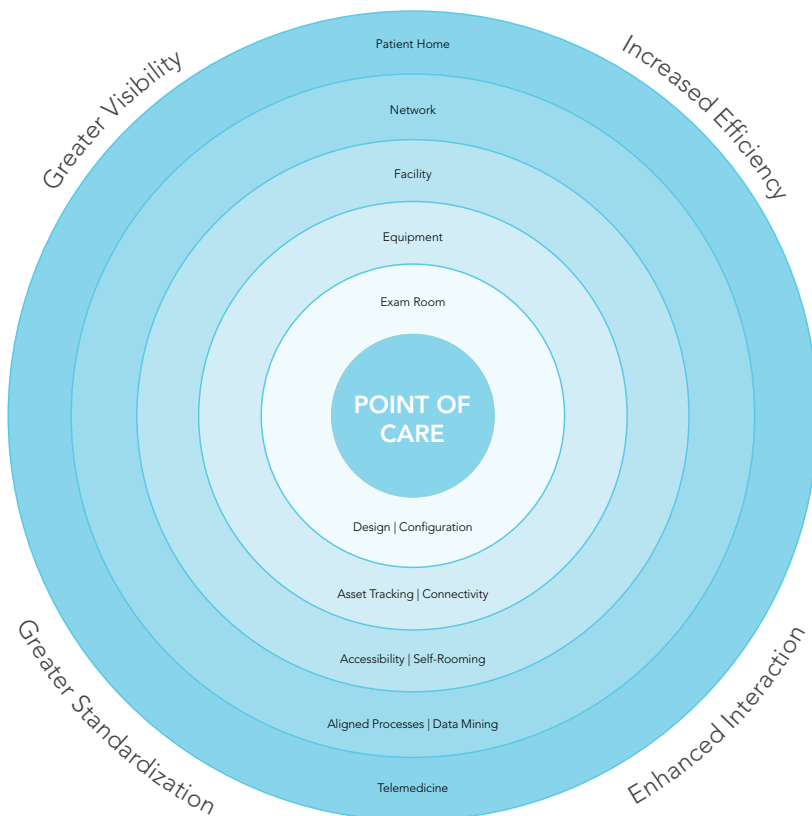


Figure 1: A connected ecosystem integrates processes, equipment and caregivers at the point of care to enhance patient and caregiver experiences and improve the quality of ambulatory care.



Set Realistic and Measureable Goals

It is now time to create realistic, measureable goals that will bring you closer to a fully connected point of care ecosystem and the steps needed to achieve those goals. Decide what overall strategy best fits your ecosystem and frame your goals around themes like supporting the move to value-based care, focusing on the Quadruple Aim or developing a patient-centered approach.

Overall goals could include:

Gain a better understanding of existing work processes to make data-driven business decisions that will ultimately enhance patient care.

Implement a standardized approach that enables development of clinical protocols that reduce human variables and drive better outcomes.

Increase efficiency by identifying opportunities to enhance and improve processes and workflows.

Enhance patient-caregiver interaction by making informed decisions and delivering a patient-centered experience at every encounter.

Make Necessary Changes

Now that you have the framework for your journey, use it as a guide to monitor progress as you identify opportunities, test potential solutions, analyze results and implement successful solutions.

Evaluate the data being gathered to identify the level of success or barriers that need to be addressed.

Revisit assessment results and goals on a periodic basis to ensure you and your care teams are staying on the predetermined path.



Changes in the healthcare industry are placing greater importance on the point of care ecosystem. The journey to build a fully connected point of care ecosystem may seem like a daunting task, but with the right framework in place a clear path can be identified. By better understanding the current state of your ecosystem, you can envision a realistic roadmap for creating a fully connected ecosystem to improve quality of care and outcomes.



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