

# Creating a Connected Point of Care Ecosystem

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**Tom Schwieterman,  
MD, MBA**

Vice President of Clinical Affairs  
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Midmark

Creating a better point of care experience for patients and physicians alike is critically important. “In the world of health reform, increased legislation, and the fast pace of change, the exam room is becoming a precious resource that has to be optimized,” says Tom Schwieterman, MD, MBA, vice president of clinical affairs and chief medical officer at Midmark. But, where do you start? Patients expect a consumer retail experience from the first moment of engagement. Physicians want tightly choreographed, efficient, and standardized processes. They also want advanced tools, and actionable data, to engage with patients and provide an exceptional experience.



**Matt Bourne**

Vice President of Medical Sales,  
Midmark

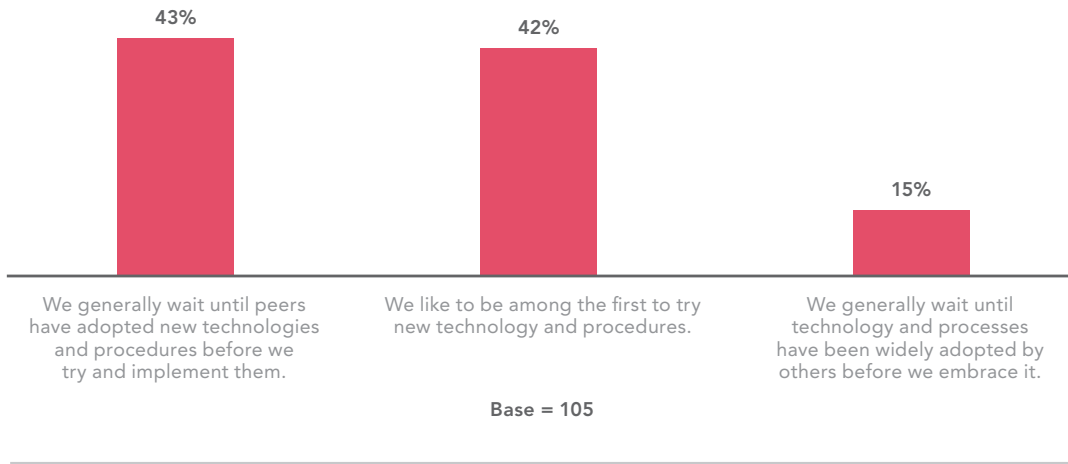
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“Many pieces must come together, but organizations with a connected point of care ecosystem are making it happen,” he says. Matt Bourne, vice president of medical sales at Midmark, agrees. “A fully connected point of care ecosystem allows current and predictive information to be shared at the point of care, enhancing efficiency, throughput, and greater patient and physician satisfaction, which leads to better outcomes. This is about creating deep engagement between the patient and the provider.”

Indeed, it’s an exciting time in healthcare, says Schwieterman. “Achieving a fully connected point of care ecosystem is not a future state. Healthcare already has the technology, processes, and systems.” To get there requires a commitment to change and innovation. Providers must invest in new technologies, forge stronger partnerships with physicians, and work with trusted partners.

### When adopting new technologies and processes, which of the following best characterizes your staff and facility?

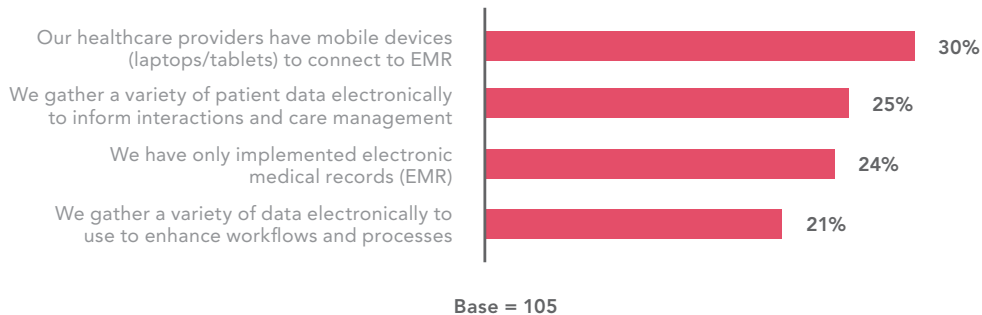


### Why a fully connected point of care ecosystem matters

In a recent HealthLeaders Buzz Survey, supported by Midmark, 105 senior-level industry leaders—including those from health systems, hospitals, physician groups, and health plans—shared key insights into their goals and progress for improving their point of care ecosystems. The results show that some organizations are still at the early stages of connectivity. When asked about the level of connectivity at the point of care, 30% said their healthcare providers have mobile devices to connect to the electronic medical record (EMR), 25% gather patient data electronically to inform interactions and care management, and 24% have only implemented an EMR. “The numbers are low,” says Bourne. “Just because you have a mobile laptop and an EMR doesn’t equal connection. When information is truly connected, it can be integrated into a data warehouse that will eliminate transcriptive errors that cause a lot of disruption.”

At the same time, when it comes to investing in technology, 43% generally wait until their peers have adopted new technologies and procedures before trying and implementing them, while

### How connected is your point of care ecosystem?



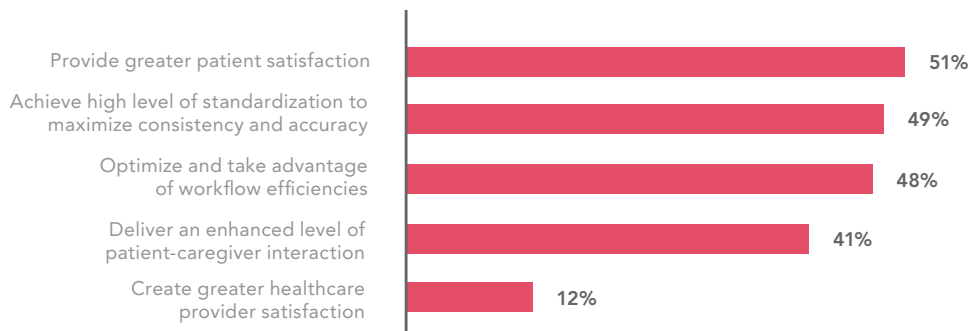
42% like to be among the first to try them. "I was also surprised by these percentages because we have to do things differently, and we have to use new technology," says Schwieterman. "What we have is not working, and the physician burnout rate is reaching 50%." Physicians require better support, workflows, and technologies that allow them to freely interact with patients.

The point of care environment sets the tone for the entire physician-patient interaction. "That chemistry is critical," says Schwieterman. When a point of care ecosystem is fully connected, data is managed thoughtfully, patients move where they need to move, care teams have unrestricted access to patients, and patients have an intimate relationship with their doctors. A well-designed point of care ecosystem also drives greater engagement between physicians and patients, as well as boosts the experience for both. "Studies show that those patients are increasingly more engaged, activated, and tend to have better outcomes and lower utilization of healthcare resources," he says.

A connected system also uses advanced technology, processes, and workflows that enable physicians to practice at the top of their license. "There are dozens of distractors that don't allow that top-of-license performance," says Schwieterman. "The number one repeated element, causing dissatisfaction for both the physician and the patient, is when the physician constantly types data into the EMR." It's important to minimize unnecessary typing and other distractions for physicians, such as having to leave the room to find a diagnostic tool. "It's also better for the patient if all of the equipment and data are in the right space, the patient is in the right position, and everything else is coordinated so when the patient leaves, you minimize the downstream additional touch points," he adds. "The ecosystem should engage those types of problems and solve them for you."

A high-functioning point of care ecosystem sets the stage to allow both administrators and providers to achieve their specific goals aimed at improving healthcare quality and

### What are the top two goals you seek to achieve to improve the quality of the ambulatory care provided across your facilities?



Base = 105  
Multi-response

outcomes. Survey respondents say providing greater patient satisfaction (51%), achieving a high level of standardization (49%), optimizing workflow efficiencies (48%), and enhancing patient-caregiver interaction (41%) are top goals for improving the quality of the ambulatory care provided across their facilities. Still, provider satisfaction (12%) was a low priority for respondents and shouldn't be overlooked, says Schwieterman. "Physician engagement must be strong in order to drive peak performance and meet patient experience, quality, and cost goals."

### **Harnessing the power of technology across the ecosystem**

Technology has advanced significantly, enhancing connectivity within healthcare facilities to remove pre-conceived barriers, including privacy issues, concerns over early adoption of new technology, scalability, and costs. When asked to select elements of the connected point of care ecosystem that their staff and their facility use in the exam room, 67% of respondents said they use technology that enhances clinical data management, providing patient information at the caregiver's fingertips. "Providers are clearly saying they need that patient information immediately," says Schwieterman. According to the survey, 30% have fully connected equipment and devices with automated data entry at the point of care.

Having the right technology at the point of care is also important for standardizing processes. Many respondents agree and are going beyond the EMR to standardize vital signs acquisition (42%), use digital assets tracking and management (26%), and use a real-time locating system to identify and correct bottlenecks in patient flow (16%). Clinical standardization reduces errors as clinicians

gather information on blood pressure, weight, and height, notes Schwieterman. "The more you standardize patient data acquisition, the more you are sure that when it gets to the chart it isn't chart lore (clinical information that may or may not be true about a patient) but rather a clinical record of knowledge," he says.

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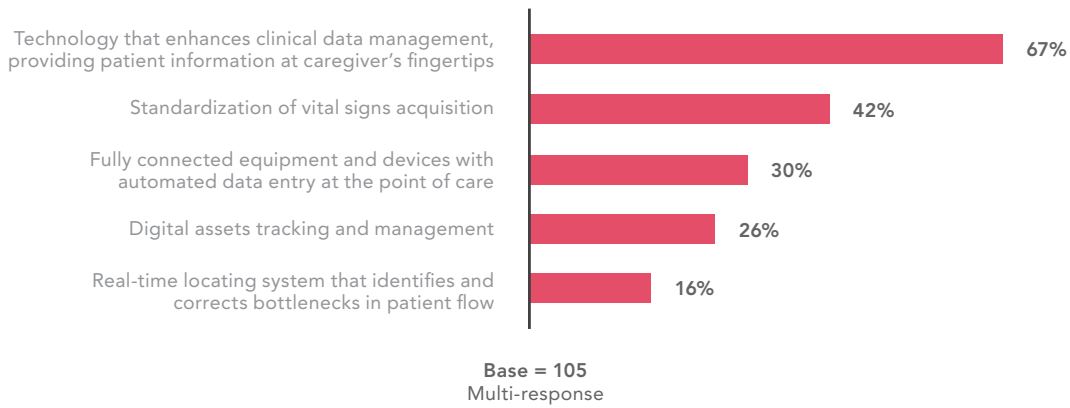
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"Something as simple as standardizing processes around a better BP capture is significant on a patient's risk profile," adds Bourne.

Real-time tracking is especially important in improving provider workflows and improving the patient experience, say Schwieterman and Bourne. "There are very few areas more complex than a physician's office. It can be chaotic and difficult to assess what is going on and where your bottlenecks are at any one time," says Schwieterman. These systems can pinpoint where time is spent and how long patients are waiting.

"A lot more provider organizations are starting to look for partners to help them standardize and drive these processes through technology and digitization of their devices, allowing them to easily transfer reliable information into their systems," says Bourne. "It is important to continue the push to develop new technologies and processes that allow

### What elements of the connected point of care ecosystem are your staff and facility currently employing with the exam room?

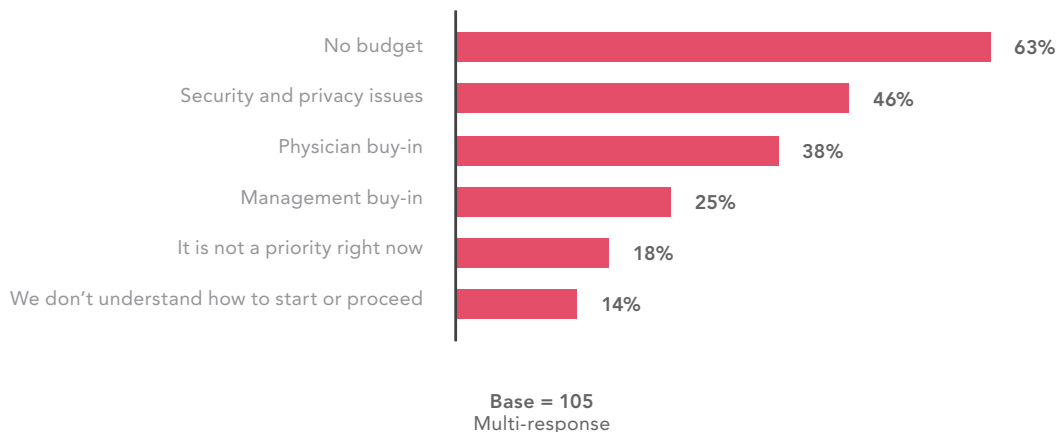


physicians to standardize and reduce the amount of variability in how they diagnose and treat patients, especially those with chronic diseases.”

### Achieving better connectivity at the point of care

Schwieterman and Bourne point out that tools and systems to solve connectivity problems are already available from reputable vendors. However, 54% of respondents say a lack of budget is their biggest obstacle to a fully connected ecosystem, while others cite security and privacy issues (33%), physician buy-in (28%), and management buy-in (24%). Schwieterman and Bourne maintain that despite these barriers, there is a path forward. Healthcare systems must carefully examine their outlook for outpatient care and how tomorrow’s exam rooms can lead to better care experiences, outcomes, and satisfaction, ultimately bending back the cost curve.

### What is your biggest obstacle to a fully connected ecosystem?



“We are very early on in this connected world, but it will get interesting quickly as the ecosystem starts to collect broader information,” says Schwieterman. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are the next advancements. Patient data will go beyond physical findings and lab results, with organizations beginning to capture next-generation data from apps and devices to create a better overall picture of the patient’s health. Ultimately, this may result in expanding the point of care, he says. “We must engage with patients as much as possible on remote technology, whether it is a portal or smart media,

to understand what is happening when they leave the room and make sure we can care for them for the long term.”

Having a connected point of care ecosystem will also become increasingly important as large and medium-size health systems continue to acquire other outpatient facilities through mergers. “It creates a ton of disruption,” says Bourne. “Those who are able to integrate, change, and develop those best practices across the enterprise will be the most successful in improving quality and care outcomes, as well as developing those economies of scale.”

#### About Midmark:

Midmark is the only clinical environmental design company that enables a better care experience at the point of care in medical, dental and animal health. Our unique approach to designing all of our products and solutions revolves around a single idea: Harmonizing space, technology and workflows to enhance interactions between patients and caregivers. The result of this process is more efficient care and better outcomes—clinical, operational and financial.

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