

Featuring
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David Truog
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Prioritizing Emotions When Designing the Healthcare Experience

David Truog, Forrester VP and Principal Analyst, and guest speaker of a recent Soul Machines webinar on Digital People in Healthcare, answers our key questions and provides industry insights.

01

How is emotional connection important in healthcare, compared to other sectors?

Forrester's research has proven that emotion is the most significant driver of customer experience quality across all sectors. In healthcare, the emotional quality of interactions between caregivers and patients is especially important because it affects more than just patient satisfaction. It has a positive impact on the patient's perception of empathic connection, increases trust in treatment, and can even directly influence outcomes because of the physiological effects of emotional states.



02

What is the impact of emotional connection on patient outcomes?

First, interactions a caregiver has with patients often have to do with threats to their health and well-being — topics that tend to evoke fear and anxiety, which a sense of empathic emotional connection can alleviate. Second, treatment outcomes tend to improve when the patient feels a positive emotional connection with the caregiver since the sense of connection inspires trust and therefore increases compliance. Third, emotional well-being has been shown to directly contribute to symptom resolution and pain control, among other benefits, because of its impact on the immune system and other psychosomatic effects.

03

How does evidence-based medicine connect to the importance of emotion in healthcare — or are the two in conflict?

The evidence-based medicine movement, which emerged 30 years ago, emphasizes the importance of grounding treatment decisions in the best available information, especially new research, rather than relying excessively on tradition and habit. And recent research has found more and more evidence for the causal links between positive emotional states and improvement in patient outcomes. So evidence-based medicine is not in conflict with the importance of emotion in healthcare. In fact, ignoring or neglecting the impact of the emotional quality of patient-caregiver interactions on outcomes would itself run counter to evidence-based medicine best practices.



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