

With AI the Doctor Can See You Now

As healthcare becomes increasingly complex and patient needs grow more diverse, patients demand more convenient, personalized, and efficient services. Improvement in physician appointment scheduling can improve patient satisfaction and outcomes. Many patients find the process of scheduling an appointment to be difficult and time-consuming, which can discourage them from seeking care when they need it. However, with the help of AI-powered scheduling tools, healthcare providers can make the scheduling process more accessible, efficient, and patient-friendly.

Patient Scheduling Challenges

According to a 2022 AMN Health Care report average wait time to schedule an appointment was 26 days for 15 large metro areas. Specialty wait times were equally high.

Traditionally, patients have had to schedule appointments by calling their physician's office during business hours, which can be difficult for those who work during those hours or have other commitments. Patients may also have to wait on hold for extended periods or navigate a complicated automated phone system, leading to frustration and discouraging patients from seeking care.

There are many reasons for this difficulty in scheduling appointments. For one, the healthcare industry has traditionally been slow to adopt new technologies that could streamline the scheduling process. Many healthcare providers still need to rely on outdated scheduling systems, such as paper calendars or phone systems, which can be slow and cumbersome. Additionally, healthcare providers often require more resources to devote to scheduling as they mainly focus on providing patient care.

Using AI to Improve Scheduling

AI-powered scheduling tools help address these challenges by making the scheduling process more efficient and patient-friendly. These tools use machine learning algorithms to analyze



Barry P Chaiken, MD

Dr. Chaiken has over 25 years' experience in healthcare information technology, clinical transformation, and business intelligence. He provides thought leadership and strategic and analytics assessments in healthcare information technology, quality of care, clinical change management, and business development.

Chaiken has worked with the NIH, Tableau/Salesforce, Infor, McKesson, UK National Health Service, Boston University, and others.

Navigating the Code

The healthcare industry, unlike many others, runs on time-tested ways to practice excellence in medicine. But does that mean adherence to practices and processes that are fifty, seventy, even a hundred years old?

Dr. Barry P. Chaiken thinks not. His 25+ years of experience as a physician and an informaticist, he believes information technology is healthcare's greatest problem-solving tool for resolving the greatest medical and business problems of the 21st century.

[Navigating the Code: How Revolutionary Transforms the Patient-Physician Journey—Available on Amazon \(Kindle and Audible\) and at *navigatingthecode.com*](#)

data on appointment availability, patient preferences, and other factors to optimize the scheduling process. They also automate many of the tasks involved in scheduling, such as sending appointment reminders, rescheduling appointments, and filling canceled appointment slots.

Some commercially available products allow patients to search for healthcare providers based on location, insurance coverage, and other preferences. These platforms use AI algorithms to suggest appointment times that are most convenient for patients based on location and availability. They also offer features such as automated appointment reminders and the ability to book appointments directly through its platform, making the scheduling process more streamlined and convenient for patients.

Benefits of AI Scheduling

AI-powered scheduling tools offer healthcare providers a range of benefits that can help improve patient scheduling. These include:

1. **Online scheduling:** Allows patients to schedule appointments online anytime, anywhere. This is particularly helpful for patients who work during regular business hours or have mobility issues. Online scheduling also helps reduce the workload for healthcare providers, as it can automate many scheduling tasks that are otherwise handled manually.
2. **Simplified appointment process:** Simplifies the appointment process for patients by offering precise and easy-to-follow steps for booking appointments. This reduces the confusion patients may experience when scheduling an appointment over the phone or in person.
3. **Clear communication:** Provides patients with clear communication about their appointment, including confirmation of the appointment time, location, and necessary preparation instructions. This reduces the likelihood of missed appointments or miscommunication between patients and providers.
4. **Optimized scheduling algorithms:** Uses machine learning algorithms to optimize scheduling based on patient pref-

Barry P Chaiken, MD

14 Durham Street
Boston, MA 02115
0-646-827-0593
M-617-304-4487
bchaiken@docsnetwork.com
Twitter - @bchaiken

For further information on
securing Dr. Chaiken as a
speaker—drbarryspeaks.com

erences, provider availability, and other factors. This ensures that patients can schedule appointments conveniently while reducing wait times and improving provider efficiency.

Physicians Making Scheduling Simpler

Healthcare providers also have a role in making the scheduling process more patient-friendly. These include:

1. **Offer flexible scheduling:** Improves patient satisfaction by offering scheduling on expanded scheduling options such as evening or weekend appointments. This accommodates patients' busy schedules and reduces the likelihood of missed appointments.
2. **Provides clear communication:** Enhances the scheduling process by providing patients with clear communication about appointment availability, preparation instructions, and other necessary information. This reduces the likelihood of missed appointments and ensures patients can adequately prepare for their visit.
3. **Use technology to improve communication:** Using technology, such as patient portals or messaging apps, improves patient communication. This helps patients schedule appointments, ask questions, and receive updates about their care in a more convenient and accessible way.
4. **Utilize AI-powered scheduling tools:** These tools streamline the scheduling process for their patients, and several companies offer these solutions.
5. **Offer online scheduling:** By allowing patients to schedule appointments online, healthcare providers improve the patient experience and reduce the burden on their resources. Online scheduling allows healthcare providers to collect vital patient information ahead of time, reducing wait times and improving the overall efficiency of the appointment process.
6. **Explore innovative technologies:** Chatbots help patients schedule appointments by providing quick answers to frequently asked questions and assisting with scheduling appointments in real time.

What is Hallucination in AI?

Hallucination in AI refers to the generation of outputs that may sound plausible but are either factually incorrect or unrelated to the given context. These outputs often emerge from the AI model's inherent biases, lack of real-world understanding, or training data limitations. In other words, the AI system "hallucinates" information that it has not been explicitly trained on, leading to unreliable or misleading responses.

Source: <https://bernardmarr.com/chatgpt-what-are-hallucinations-and-why-are-they-a-problem-for-ai-systems/>

In conclusion, AI-powered scheduling tools help healthcare providers improve the patient scheduling experience in several ways. By leveraging machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, and other AI techniques, healthcare providers can create more streamlined, patient-friendly scheduling processes available 24/7.

Healthcare providers can also improve patient scheduling by offering online scheduling options, partnering with other healthcare organizations or technology companies, and exploring innovative technologies like chatbots.

While AI-powered scheduling tools are not a one-size-fits-all solution, they can play an essential role in improving the patient scheduling experience and reducing the burden on healthcare providers. As technology continues to evolve, we will see even more innovative solutions to improve the patient experience in the future.

Human References:

1. AMN Healthcare. 2022 Survey of Physician Appointment Wait Times. <https://www.merrithawkins.com/trends-and-insights/article/surveys/2022-physician-wait-times-survey/>
2. Mills, T. (2020). How AI is revolutionizing healthcare. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/01/15/how-ai-is-revolutionizing-health-care/>

Hallucinations:

1. According to a Medical Group Management Association survey, scheduling appointments with patients is one of healthcare providers' most significant challenges. The survey found that the average wait time for a new patient appointment is 24 days, with some specialties having wait times of up to 54 days. Additionally, 82% of patients reported that they experienced difficulties scheduling an appointment with their provider.

AI Reference Hallucinations:

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14 Durham Street
Boston, MA 02115
0-646-827-0593
M-617-304-4487
bchaiken@docsnetwork.com
Twitter - @bchaiken

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4. American Medical Association. (2019). Improving access to care: Technology's role in meeting the demand for physician services. www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-04/improving-access-to-care-technology.pdf
5. McInerney, M. (2018). How AI is revolutionizing healthcare. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelmcinerney/2018/07/16/how-ai-is-revolutionizing-healthcare/?sh=1c61a31d5286>

[Author Note](#): I asked ChatGPT (4.0) to write an article on AI's ability to help patients schedule physician visits. By requesting several “regenerations” of the responses, I constructed a more informative article from pieces of each version. This is the finished document.