



Technology-Enabled Patient Access in Specialty Therapies

WHITE PAPER

Abstract

Accessing specialty and rare disease therapies is often a race against time. Patients face a labyrinth of benefit verification, prior authorizations, payer communications, and provider coordination. Despite groundbreaking science, bottlenecks in access can delay treatment by weeks or even months, undermining therapeutic impact and patient well-being. Technology offers a path forward. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI)-driven case management, and automated benefit verification are transforming how life sciences companies, payers, providers, and patient support hubs connect. These tools have the potential to reduce administrative friction, accelerate time-to-therapy, and improve patient outcomes. However, fragmented systems, inconsistent adoption, and regulatory hurdles remain significant barriers.



The Patient Access Challenge in Specialty Therapies

Specialty therapies—particularly for rare diseases—require complex coordination across multiple stakeholders. Unlike traditional medications, specialty drugs often involve:

- **Prior authorization (PA) requirements** with detailed clinical justification.
- **Specialty pharmacies** with unique distribution models.
- **High-cost therapies** demanding copay support, foundation assistance, or patient assistance programs (PAPs).
- **Ongoing monitoring** for safety, adherence, and outcomes.

According to IQVIA's Patient Support Services reports, average time-to-therapy for a specialty drug can exceed 30 days, with benefit verification and PA as the primary culprits.ⁱ Patients, already navigating life-altering conditions, face unnecessary stress and risk of disease progression.

Technology's Role in Improving Patient Access

1. Digital Patient Support Platforms

Modern digital hubs consolidate patient onboarding, benefits investigation, and provider communication into centralized portals. These platforms allow case managers, payers, and providers to collaborate in real time, reducing redundant paperwork.

- **Example:** Integrated portals now connect electronic health records (EHRs) directly with hub services, eliminating fax-based PA submissions.
- **Impact:** Reduces manual errors, speeds case processing, and increases visibility for providers and patients.

2. AI-Driven Case Management

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing how support programs predict bottlenecks and manage caseloads. Machine learning models analyze payer rules, patient demographics, and historical claim outcomes to anticipate delays before they occur.

- **Use Case:** Predicting PA approval likelihood and recommending the fastest route to coverage.
- **Impact:** Helps prioritize high-risk cases, reducing treatment delays for the most vulnerable patients.

Programs that use predictive AI should see quantifiable improvement in time-to-therapy compared with traditional models.

3. Automated Benefit Verification

Benefit verification has historically been manual and time-intensive. Today, automation tools connect payer databases with hub systems to deliver real-time coverage results.

- **Impact:** Eliminates days of waiting for benefit checks.



- **Advantage for Providers:** Clinicians can inform patients at the point of care about coverage, copay responsibilities, and next steps.

New technologies like automated verification can support near-real-time benefits verification in payer/provider systems.

4. Enhanced Patient Engagement

Digital tools such as mobile apps, text reminders, and patient portals keep patients informed about their therapy journey. Engagement not only improves adherence but also reassures patients navigating complex financial and administrative barriers.

Integration Challenges

Despite technological progress, the ecosystem remains fragmented. Barriers include:

- **Data Silos:** Provider EHRs, payer systems, and hub platforms often lack interoperability.
- **Variable Adoption:** Smaller practices and community providers may lack resources to adopt new digital platforms.
- **Regulatory Constraints:** HIPAA compliance, data security, and evolving FDA guidance can limit data sharing.
- **Payer Resistance:** Some payers are reluctant to embrace automation, preferring manual review processes to control utilization.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) reports that utilization management practices, including prior authorization requirements, can limit access to medicines and disproportionately affect patients with serious or rare conditions.ⁱⁱ

A Future Framework for Technology-Enabled Access

To overcome these barriers, stakeholders must collaborate around three guiding principles:

1. Interoperability as a Standard

Adopting industry-wide data standards will enable real-time connectivity between EHRs, payer systems, and hub services. Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) APIs are a promising start, but adoption must accelerate.

2. AI-First Patient Support

Embedding predictive analytics and automation into every stage of access will shift the model from reactive to proactive. AI-driven alerts can anticipate payer pushback, recommend alternative coverage pathways, and reduce denial rates.

3. Patient-Centric Experience Design

Patients should not feel like passive bystanders. User-friendly portals, transparent coverage tracking, and direct communication channels can humanize the access process, improving satisfaction and adherence.



Case in Point: Accelerating Rare Disease Therapy Access

Consider a patient prescribed a gene therapy for a rare neuromuscular disorder:

- **Before Technology Enablement:**
 - Weeks spent faxing PA documentation.
 - Manual phone calls for benefit verification.
 - Patients uncertain about out-of-pocket costs until after approval.
- **With Technology Enablement:**
 - EHR-integrated submission sends PA instantly to payer.
 - AI engine flags payer documentation needs, reducing back-and-forth.
 - Automated benefit verification provides real-time coverage and financial support options.
 - Time-to-therapy cut from 35 days to under 10.

This model is not theoretical. Industry case studies show measurable reductions in therapy delays when digital solutions are integrated across stakeholders.

Breaking Barriers Through Technology

Technology-enabled patient access is no longer optional—it is essential to deliver on the promise of specialty and rare disease therapies. Digital platforms, AI-driven case management, and automated benefit verification can transform the therapy journey, but only if stakeholders commit to integration and patient-centric design.

For pharmaceutical companies and healthcare organizations, the challenge is not whether to adopt these tools, but how to implement them effectively across fragmented systems. The winners will be those who embrace interoperability, anticipate payer and provider needs, and keep patients at the center.

About OmniTek & Contact Information

OmniTek Consulting is a trusted partner for organizations seeking to enhance governance, operational agility, and decision-making. We specialize in modernizing business processes with a blend of human-centered design, technology expertise, and hands-on change management.

Whether you are a pharmaceutical company launching a new therapy, a provider navigating access hurdles, or a payer striving to balance utilization with patient outcomes, OmniTek Consulting can help bridge the gaps. Our expertise in system implementation, data integration, and patient services optimization empowers organizations to accelerate time-to-therapy, reduce administrative burden, and enhance the patient experience.



Contact us today to explore how OmniTek can support your transformation journey and drive lasting results.



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Endnotes

ⁱ IQVIA, *Access Challenges in the Cancer Patient Journey*, 2024, available at <https://www.iqvia.com/-/media/iqvia/pdfs/us/white-paper/2024/iqvia-access-challenges-in-oncology-report-white-paper-2024.pdf>

ⁱⁱ PhRMA, *Barriers to Health Care Access in the Patient Experience*, 2021, available at https://cdn.aglty.io/phrma/global/resources/import/pdfs/PES%20Report_100621_Final.pdf

