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TOP **10** TACTICS

To Improve Patient-Reported Outcomes Compliance

A Practical Guide for Providers and Health System Leaders

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Introduction

As healthcare in the United States shifts toward value-based care, patient-reported outcomes (PROs) become even more important to patients, providers, and payers. Clinically, PROs focus on quality of life and daily activity rather than physiological and medical results, which helps providers understand patient goals, engage in shared decision-making, and track whether care is actually improving how patients feel and function.

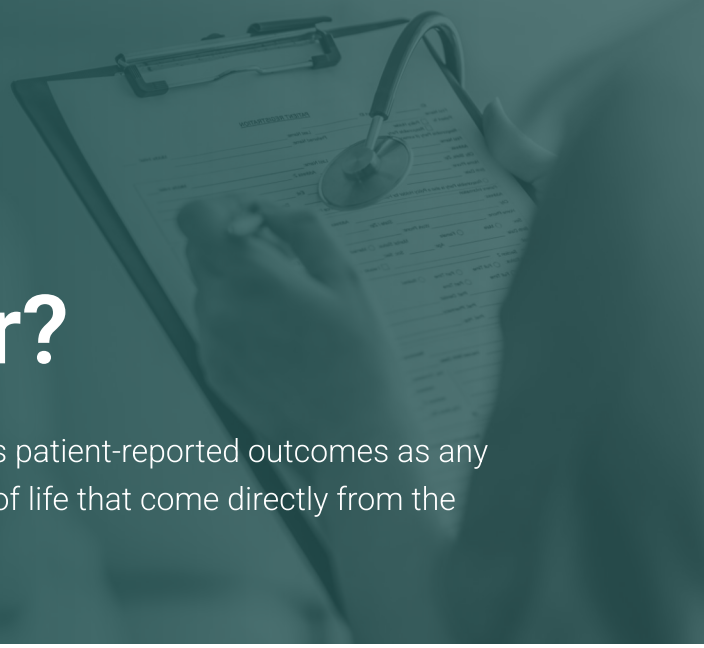
But PROs only work when enough patients complete them, and high compliance has proven hard to achieve. This eBook gives providers and health system leaders practical tips to increase patient compliance rates and put outcomes data to work.



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What Are PROs and **Why Do They Matter?**



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) defines patient-reported outcomes as any reports of a patient's health condition, symptoms, or quality of life that come directly from the patient, without clinical interpretation.

Patient-reported outcomes reflect how the patient actually feels or functions, rather than a doctor's observation or a lab test.

Patients typically report on:

- General health, including mood,
- Health-related issues, including quality of life, functional status, and ability to complete various activities,
- Symptoms, such as pain and fatigue, and the burden of those symptoms,
- Health behaviors, including smoking, diet, and exercise, and
- Side effects from new medications or treatments.

PROs are usually collected through validated questionnaires that patients complete themselves. These range from general health surveys to questions about a specific condition or treatment. For example, the Knee Injury and Osteoarthritis Outcome Score (KOOS) tracks short- and long-term symptoms and function in patients with knee injuries or osteoarthritis, showing how they change over time.

PROs help providers spot strengths and gaps in care, benchmark against peers, and assess how effective they are at helping patients build healthy habits. When used across an organization, the data reveals where providers excel, and where improvements are needed to optimize care delivery and population outcomes.

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How do PROs differ from patient experience surveys?

PROs capture how patients feel about the results of their care, not the service they received. A patient might praise easy scheduling and clear communication, yet still be unhappy that they can't climb a flight of stairs after treatment.

Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs) focus on health status, symptoms, pain levels, fatigue, emotional well-being, and ability to perform daily activities. They answer the question: Did the treatment actually improve the patient's health?

Patient Experience (PREMs) focus on the delivery of care, including factors such as provider communication, staff responsiveness, cleanliness, and waiting times. They answer the question: How was the journey of receiving that care?

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Challenges with Patient-Reported Outcome Collection

Despite their value, PROs remain underused in the U.S., according to The Commonwealth Fund.

Common barriers include:

- Outcomes are hard to tie to treatment, because factors like patient compliance and social determinants of health (SDoH) also shape results.
- Clinicians can't bill for the time spent administering surveys or interpreting data.
- Measurement and analysis require a large dataset, which requires high patient compliance.
- Providers may lack the training or resources to turn outcome reports into action.
- Teams fear PRO collection will disrupt clinical workflows.

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The Role of **Patient Compliance**

Clinicians need a large, reliable database of outcomes to assess quality, improve care delivery, and conduct research, but building one depends on patients taking part.

Compliance varies by treatment and purpose. One study of shoulder arthroplasty patients found PRO compliance of 72% at baseline, 47% at one year, and 33% at two years. In contrast, a study of clinical trials reported 93.1% overall.

Academic journals generally treat 80% compliance at two years as the "gold standard." To get there, providers typically need to hit these rates along the way:

95%+	95%+	93%+	90%+	85%+	80%+
Baseline	2-6 Weeks	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Years

These rates are hard to reach and harder to sustain. The 10 tactics that follow show how.

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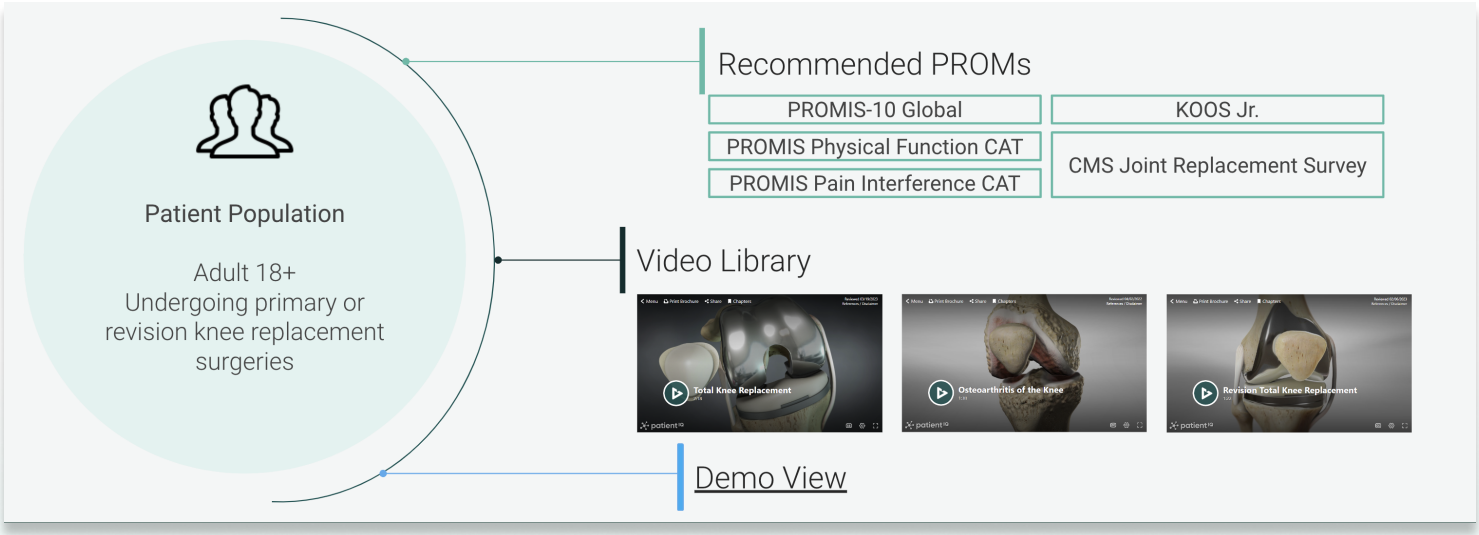


Top 10 Tactics to **Achieve High Compliance**

1. Set **Clear Goals**

PROs can measure many things, from patient perceptions of treatment and quality of care to functional status and symptom severity. The data is most valuable when you know why you're collecting it, so define the purpose first. What are you trying to achieve? What do you want to measure? Be specific. A clear purpose helps you choose the right instrument and reach the right patients with the right questions at the right milestones. That clarity also makes your program more relevant to patients, which drives the next tactic.

PatientIQ example pathway

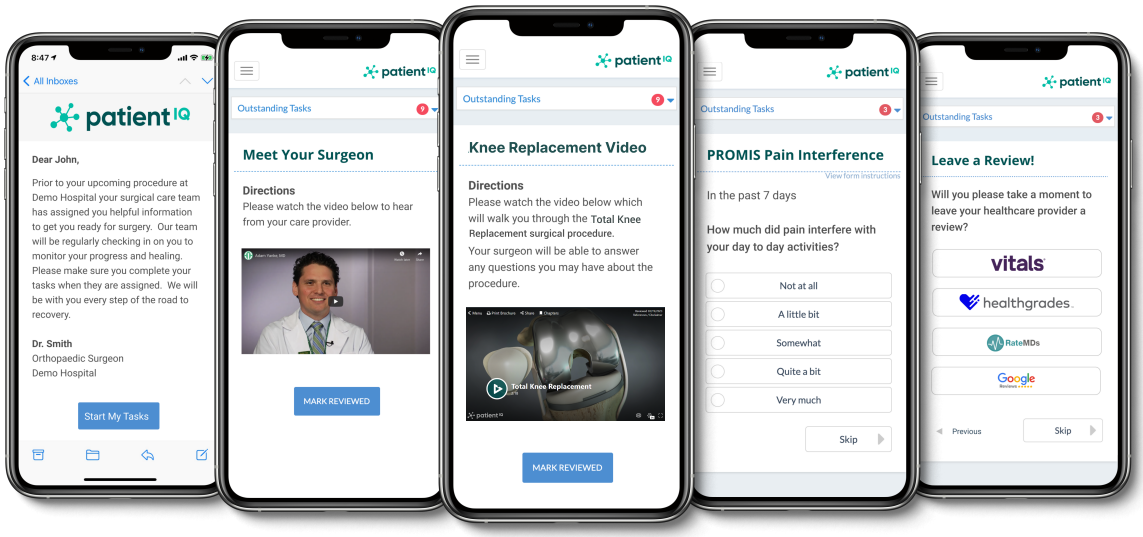


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2. Provide **Relevant Content**

Patients have short attention spans and are often wary of sharing personal information, which hurts compliance. To earn participation, ask only for information that applies to each patient, because nothing stops participation faster than a question that doesn't.

Relevance goes beyond the questionnaire. High-compliance organizations also give patients educational content specific to their condition or procedure. That improves the experience and builds trust, and trust drives compliance.



3. Use **Previously Validated Questions** Whenever Possible

Many PRO questionnaires have already been standardized and validated, so use them when you can. The Short Form-12 (SF-12), for example, is a 12-question survey widely used to measure quality of life, and LupusPRO tracks the impact of lupus and its treatments. Validated tools exist for most settings, from primary care to clinical trials. They've been rigorously tested with their target patients, they save time on survey development, and their results are harder to challenge than those from a new survey.

When no validated tool fits, such as with a unique or previously unstudied population, start with validated questions and adapt from there.

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4. Avoid Questions **That Can Be Misinterpreted**

Vague wording leads patients to read questions differently. Ask knee surgery patients to describe their pain and you'll get a wide range of answers. Ask them to compare their pain before and after surgery and the answers get more specific. Questions open to multiple interpretations produce inconsistent data and can discourage patients from participating. Direct, plainly worded questions also help avoid vague or misleading responses.

5. Engage **Physicians and Administrators**

A JAMA Network Open study of 205 Massachusetts clinics found that engaged physicians and administrators are essential to PRO collection. Compliance was higher when physicians were trained to use PROs and administrators monitored collection rates. A clinical champion and prior staff experience with PROs also helped. Health systems launching PRO programs should prioritize clinician and administrator engagement from day one.

6. Set Expectations at the **Point of Care**

As Tactic 5 showed, compliance rises when physicians are engaged. The same goes for patients. Patients are more likely to complete PRO questionnaires when they understand what they are and why they matter, so take time to discuss PROs during the visit.

Explain to patients that:

- They will be contacted to share health information.
- Their information is confidential and collected securely.
- Participation lets their provider monitor their health and step in when needed.
- Participation helps optimize their outcomes.
- Participation improves care for all patients.

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7. Make Collection **Part of Intake**

Compliance gets much harder once patients leave the clinic, so leverage every in-person visit to your advantage. At intake, check whether the patient has outstanding PRO tasks or questionnaires and let them complete those along with their other paperwork.

8. Reminders **Rule**

Reminders work. In one study of shoulder surgery patients, email reminders increased follow-up data at one and two years by nearly 26%. A separate study found that reminders more than doubled the number of people who scheduled dental check-ups within a month. Its other findings:

- The effect of reminders lasted over time and worked for many patients.
- Adding information about the benefits of check-ups did not significantly increase response rates.
- Repeated reminders neither strengthened nor weakened the effect.

9. Keep It **Simple**

Every extra click lowers the odds that a patient finishes. Keep tasks short, easy to find, and easy to understand. Make questionnaires as brief as possible and match the language to patients' health literacy levels.

10. Automate the **Process**

The Commonwealth Fund identified a core obstacle to using PROs: physicians can't bill for the time they spend compiling data or interpreting results. With staff already stretched thin, any program that depends on manual work, like hand-sent reminders or phone outreach, is unlikely to succeed. Automate collection to give your program its best chance.

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How to **Get It Done**

No single move guarantees high compliance or meaningful results. Providers need to apply many of these tactics together to get quality data, engaged patients, and real insight into care quality and the patient experience. But staff are already stretched thin, so how do you build a PRO program without overburdening them? With a Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROM) platform that automates collection, measurement, and analysis. Needs vary, but the right platform should offer these capabilities:

Automated **Patient Notifications**

Reminders work (see Tactic 8), and patients differ in how they like to be reminded. Look for a platform that can:

- Send automated emails and text messages,
- Trigger reminders based on task status,
- Personalize messages from the patient's provider or care team,
- Match the health system's branding, and
- Use email templates tested across major email clients, including Gmail, Outlook, and Apple Mail.

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Offer a Simple **Patient Experience**

Patients are more likely to share health information when the experience is simple (see Tactic 9). Look for frictionless login, so patients can participate without remembering usernames or passwords, and an intuitive interface that makes each task easy to complete.

Such an interface includes:

- Clear instructions that tell the patient what to do next,
- An actionable to-do list that automatically sequences the PRO workflow, and
- A brief orientation explaining what each question asks. For example: “Please tell us about your pain while thinking about your LEFT KNEE surgery on December 15.”

Deliver Relevant **Educational Content**

Tailored educational content that is relevant to each patient’s condition improves the experience of completing a questionnaire. Look for a platform with content that:

- Empowers patients with insights, much as educational content does for clinicians,
- Uses high-quality, digitally animated content to explain diagnoses and procedures,
- Offers timely content tied to current research and clinical protocols, and
- Includes benchmarks and trendlines that show patients how they compare with others receiving similar treatment.

Capture Every **In-Person Visit**

In-person visits are your best chance to collect PRO data. Look for a platform that can:

- Support kiosk workflows so patients can complete questionnaires before being seen,
- Alert staff when a patient with incomplete questionnaires or workflows is in the office, and
- Show staff the purpose of the visit and which tasks are still outstanding.

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Use Conditional **Logic to Assign Tasks**

Patients are more likely to finish when they have fewer tasks at once. Look for a platform that can:

- Assign the next task only after the previous one is complete,
- Support computer adaptive testing (CAT), such as the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) CAT, which tailors each question to the patient's earlier answers so patients answer fewer questions, and
- Use branching logic for both questions and task assignments.

Conclusion

As healthcare moves toward value-based care, capturing and measuring PRO data matters more than ever. But PRO data only helps when enough patients complete it, and that is hard for overworked, understaffed teams. A platform built to collect and analyze PROs gives providers the data they need without overburdening clinical and support staff.

Ready to see how it works? **Talk to a PRO expert today.**

About PatientIQ

PatientIQ is the enterprise outcomes intelligence platform that turns patient-reported data into a strategic asset. Through EHR-integrated products for clinical operations, research, and benchmarking, PatientIQ helps health systems, specialty practices, and medical device companies measure, understand, and improve patient outcomes at scale, with 76M+ outcomes collected across its network.



For more, visit **www.patientiq.io** or meet with a PRO expert.

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