

How MetroHealth built a robust and engaged patient community panel.

Community Insights allows for increased patient enrollment and feedback.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leaders at the MetroHealth System, based in Cleveland, OH, wanted to attune their organization to the needs of their customers. But building panel groups across MetroHealth's four hospitals, 20 health centers, and 40 other sites proved to be a significant logistical challenge. They turned to NRC Health's experience solutions. Through Real-time Feedback

and Community Insights, MetroHealth found that they were able to **significantly increase the number of studies** they could deploy with their research budget, and **drive up volumes** of patient survey responses. In addition, they also were able to **recruit as many patients in one month than they had in the previous three years.**

In 2014, executives at Cleveland-based MetroHealth wanted to understand their customers better. They knew that patient input was vital to the success of their organization, and they wanted to build a community of their most engaged customers in order to solicit in-depth feedback on the most urgent issues facing the organization.

At first, leadership wanted to keep most of these efforts in-house. They commissioned MetroHealth's Market Intelligence and Planning team to manage the entire process. For any group, no matter how talented, this would be a formidable challenge.

First, the team had to manually drive panel enrollment using MetroHealth's website, direct emailing, social-media announcements, community events, and sometimes even clipboard sign-up sheets.

Then came the work of planning studies, which entailed selecting the most pertinent topics for inquiry, drafting effective questions, programming those questions into their survey platform, and then splicing their patient panels into the demographics that would be most relevant to the topic at hand. All of this was done in-house, with minimal outside support or automation.

Finally, once results came in, the Market Intelligence and Planning team had to assess what they'd learned. They processed the raw data, packaged it into presentations, and pushed results to stakeholders in order to earn their buy-in and prove the validity of their results.

All told, this painstaking manual process consumed considerable time and resources—and saw considerable success. By the end of their recruitment efforts, they had about 1,800 patients enrolled, with excellent engagement.

However, staff felt the toll of the effort to sustain this momentum. Over time, this meant that enthusiasm for customer studies dwindled within the organization.

NRC Health Community Insights led to faster enrollment rates

1800

patients enrolled

1

MONTH

using
Community
Insights, from
NRC Health

36

MONTHS

using
MetroHealth
in-house
resources

The team conducted nine studies in their first year of panel recruitment, then six studies in their second, and just four in their third.

Solution

This is what drove MetroHealth's leadership to look for a change. They wanted a cost-effective way to generate more feedback from more engaged patients. They found it in NRC Health's Community Insights.

Community Insights empowers organizations to quickly—and effortlessly—build robust virtual patient communities.

Community Insights empowers organizations to quickly—and effortlessly—build robust virtual patient communities. Patients are automatically recruited after they've answered Real-time Feedback surveys. This opt-in mechanism ensures that only enthusiastic consumers will enlist in patient panels. As a result, NRC Health sees an average enrollment rate of 33%, with rates of 40% or more being not uncommon.

More importantly, Community Insights also manages study design and implementation. NRC Health's expert analysts solicit leadership concerns and design customized surveys that will answer their questions. From there, surveys are deployed across *targeted* patient groups, soliciting input from specific demographics rather than catch-all discussions.

This is important for two reasons. First, some strategic concerns affect certain patient groups more than others, and leadership will want to prioritize those patients when soliciting feedback. Second, generic survey questions can be alienating. This type of targeting, on the other hand, makes the surveys feel relevant and important to the patients answering them—which in turn helps keep them engaged.

Together, these features make Community Insights a low-touch and cost-effective way for leaders to reliably generate the feedback they need from their customers.

CONSIDER THIS

By traditional pricing models, each point-in-time study would cost MetroHealth \$20,000. This unsustainable expense meant that they'd conducted fewer studies than they'd prefer. Community Insights, however, offers MetroHealth unlimited point-in-time studies, at a single fixed rate. This enabled MetroHealth to double their study output — **and save over \$80,000 per year in the process.**

INSIGHTS IN ACTION

Before deploying a colon-screening campaign, MetroHealth surveyed patient communication preferences. They found that their patients overwhelmingly preferred SMS messages. This allowed MetroHealth to tailor their strategy and optimize outreach—while simultaneously lowering costs on expensive mailers.

"Community Insights is great because it helps us turn things around quickly, and I guarantee I will use this information for years."

—Elizabeth Clegg, Sr. Market Research Associate, Market Intelligence and Planning, The MetroHealth System

33%

average enrollment rate using Community Insights

LEARN MORE

For more on NRC Health, call 1 800 388 4264 or visit nrchealth.com.

Results

The impact of Community Insights at MetroHealth was all-encompassing. Leadership brought in stakeholders from across every aspect of their organization, including Business Development, Marketing, Operations, Patient Experience, Transformation, and Care Delivery, to all consult on how they would deploy the new tool.

The organization faced some pushback about Community Insights' digital-first approach. Some stakeholders believed that this would lead to bias toward patients who felt more comfortable with online platforms.

However, leadership was able to show holdouts that Community Insights would not entirely *replace* analog, in-person discussions with patients. Instead, it would help *refine* these live interactions, and drive deeper conversations with the patients they'd already spoken with.

This was possible because of Community Insights' dramatic effect on community-enrollment rates. In just one month, Community Insights recruited 1,800 patients for MetroHealth's patient panels—**as many as the organization recruited in three years of effort**. After four more months with Community Insights, this number swelled to over 4,000.

Having so many members enrolled not only improved the quantity of data-points available, but also made the survey results much more credible to MetroHealth's staff. The first study with Community Insights, conducted in May 2018, yielded 563 completed surveys, a more-than-adequate sample size to judge performance. Their most recent study, in September, further improved this figure, yielding 919 responses. To scientifically trained clinicians and analysts, these high volumes signal more reliable data, which helped MetroHealth's leadership garner enthusiasm for the changes they were considering.

GOING FORWARD

Community Insights' purpose is to help organizations more easily commit to hearing the voice of the customer. For MetroHealth, that voice will come through more clearly with time. As they develop and deploy more studies, their results will grow more and more refined, continuously improving the quality of the input they're receiving from their patients. That's what makes Community Insights an enduring asset for MetroHealth's patient-feedback team.

"Having experts in the field to bounce ideas off of, and having a better product, you have an extension of your team, you have a trusted resource. Even though NRC Health is not within our four walls, it is extremely valuable to have them on the MetroHealth team."

—Elizabeth Clegg, Sr. Market Research Associate, Market Intelligence and Planning, The MetroHealth System

1,000

on average patients recruited per month **after** Community Insights

EFFICIENCY AND RECOVERY

Community Insights also immensely improved the operational efficiency of the organization's feedback. Through effective automation—and NRC Health's competitive pricing structure—Community Insights enabled MetroHealth's leadership to **curb their community recruitment spending significantly**.

Even more importantly, Community Insights helped MetroHealth's staff recover their time. The solution assumed some of the more onerous duties behind building and maintaining patient panels, which freed up the Market Intelligence and Planning team to pursue meaningful initiatives elsewhere. They were able to become more effective evangelists for patients within the MetroHealth organization.