

How can care teams combat clinical complexity?

With efficient, evidence-based, and coordinated decisions



Clinical complexities create challenging questions for care teams

For every member of the clinical team, a common mission persists: make the right decisions and deliver high-quality care that drives optimal patient outcomes. But the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a steady increase in healthcare complexity, mean that care team coordination and information sharing are more crucial than ever before.

Meanwhile, clinicians are seeing a higher volume of patients, many of whom are better informed and want to participate in shared treatment decisions. This generates more questions in clinicians' minds per patient encounter—about diagnoses, treatment plans, drug therapies, and so on. But, 60% of these questions go unanswered because there isn't enough time to pursue them.¹

With so much medical information available from multiple sources—from Wikipedia, YouTube, and Google to PubMed and reference databases—it can be difficult to know what's accurate and current. It's also time consuming to evaluate the validity of these sources—which will only get increasingly difficult as medical information continues to grow exponentially.

If the care team finds insufficient or conflicting answers to their questions, it can result in an inconsistent care experience for the patient. And the risks are great: for physicians and nurses, it could mean misdiagnosis and carrying out the wrong treatment; for pharmacists, it could lead to an adverse drug event.

Avoiding potential negative outcomes requires a new approach. Rather than spend time searching for information across multiple sources, the entire care team needs a single source of relevant, evidence-based content tailored to every question they face—whether it's a simple, in-the-moment decision or a complex case that requires deeper investigation.



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Adverse drug events cause nearly **700k ER department visits** and **100k hospitalizations** each year.²

But getting there isn't easy. To improve clinical practice through informed, confident decisions, the care team must overcome numerous challenges, including:

- Ever-increasing complexity of diseases, medicine, and practice
- Balancing efficiency and consistency across the care continuum
- Difficulty keeping up with clinical and patient trends

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Ever-increasing complexity of diseases, medicine, and practice

Medicine today is more dynamic than ever. Scientific, technological, and medical advancements are accelerating. Patients demand more from their healthcare providers, and they expect increased participation in their own care. And those patients are older and sicker than they've been in the past. In addition to COVID-19, there's a worldwide increase in chronic diseases and comorbid conditions. That often means patients need to be treated for multiple diseases by multiple caregivers with experience in multiple specialties.

Within this context, every member of the care team—now more than ever—needs access to information that lets them answer increasingly complex medical questions, find a quick answer, research a condition, evaluate a treatment plan or recommend a therapy. And they need answers they can trust. But sometimes they turn to either online resources with unreliable information or to summary content that lacks access to the deeper evidence behind recommendations.

While summary content can be useful to clinicians looking for a quick answer or information outside their specialty, it does not provide answers to complex cases that require more in-depth evidence from books and journals. Summary content alone simply can't cover complicated cases. In fact, when used exclusively or incorrectly, it can lead to diagnoses made in error, misguided treatment plans, increased length of hospital stays, and higher readmission rates.

How can care teams tackle this complexity?

- They need quick access to comprehensive and trusted content sources covering a variety of medical specialties—including nursing and pharmacy—so they can find targeted answers to even the most challenging questions.
- They must be able to dive deeper into the latest evidence and research, so they can keep up with—and apply—evolving best practices.
- They should have a simple, single-source way of accessing all of this information—from any device at any time.

Balancing efficiency and consistency across the care continuum

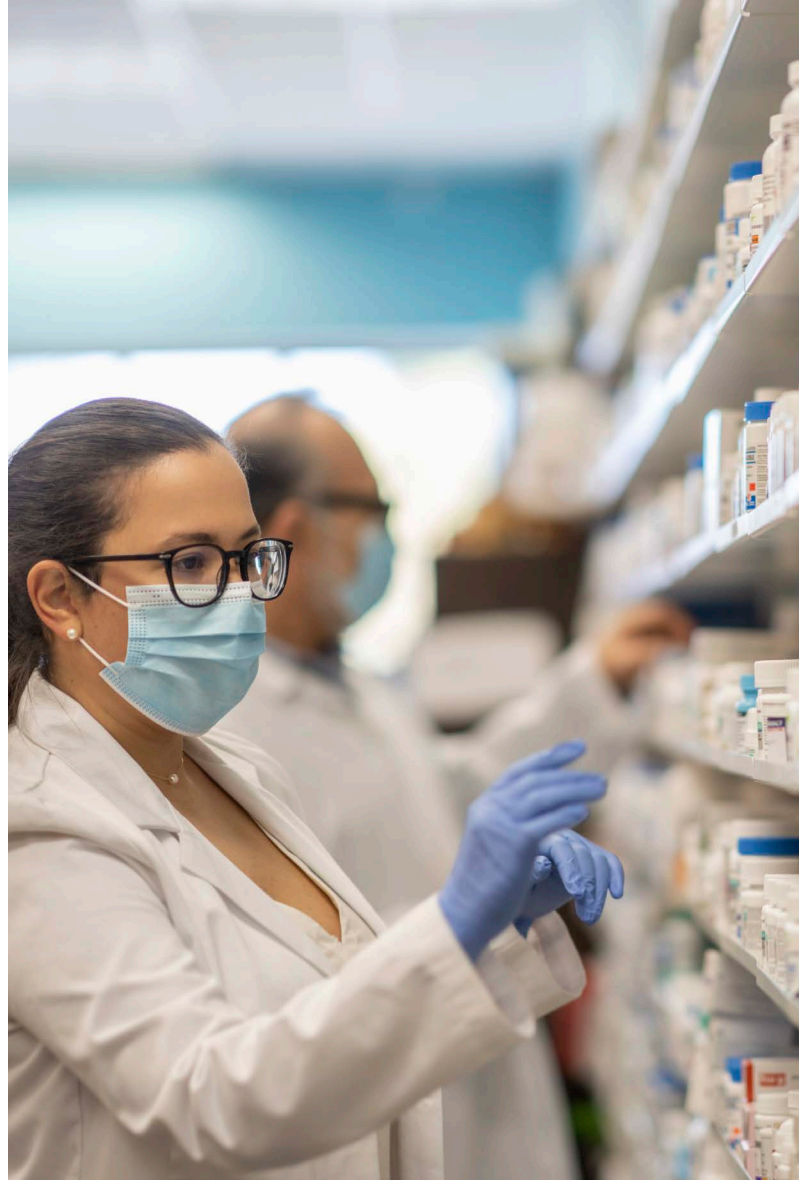
Clinicians are seeing more patients than ever, so it becomes a challenge to maximize time with each patient. This makes speed and efficiency critical factors in medical practice in two key ways.

For one, it's critical when answers are needed in the moment: at the point of care, when carrying out a treatment plan, choosing a therapy, etc.

Secondly, it's important in the context of how quickly the latest evidence and best practices disseminate to the larger medical population. For example, when illnesses like acute flaccid myelitis or COVID-19 are spreading, care teams can't always afford to wait for consensus on diagnosis and treatment from peer-review groups.

As important as efficiency is, care coordination across teams may be even more so—particularly as the expectations surrounding advanced clinical roles and interdisciplinary care continue to rise. The expanding role of pharmacists helps illustrate: many now spend significant time analyzing how patient populations are responding to new medications, co-managing clinics alongside nurse practitioners, or using pharmacogenomics to tailor drug therapies based on patient genetics.

As a result, the context in which pharmacists need to evaluate information and make recommendations is broader than ever. That means the sources they turn to for answers must be worthy of not just their time and trust, but the larger care team's as well. If pharmacists can't trust the information they find, they risk weakening the entire care team by providing guidance that puts patients and their treatment plans at risk.



How can care teams balance efficiency and consistency?

- They must be able to find fast answers they can trust from a broad range of summary and in-depth clinical content.
- They need a predictable way of ensuring they're incorporating the latest research and best practices into their everyday patient interactions and recommendations.
- They need to standardize this information across the entire team to make sure consistent care is provided among physicians, nurses, and pharmacists.



Difficulty keeping up with clinical and patient trends

The pandemic has underscored a simple fact: clinicians can never stop learning. Medicine changes, and even well-understood diseases like COPD often see new treatments as medical knowledge grows and protocols evolve over time. And in a hospital where members of the care team are at varying stages of practice and experience, it's essential they have the resources they need to learn new procedures, methods, and standards of care.

After all, clinicians are under tremendous pressure to provide thorough and complete advice and answers to medical questions based on the latest knowledge. But many clinicians must make do with free online sources like Google, YouTube, and Wikipedia, or with what they can find in summary content solutions better suited for simple, point-of-care decisions.

Free online sources typically lack evidence-based content and do not provide support for foundational learning on a continuous basis because they are neither peer-reviewed nor current. And summary content alone doesn't go deep enough for complex cases.

Clinical information that lags behind can quickly put your clinicians at a disadvantage when they're making treatment plans, verifying complicated diagnoses, or exploring new therapies. In fact, lacking easy access to current, credible, evidence-based information can lead to patient care errors and disastrous outcomes.

How can care teams keep up with these trends?

- They need a reliable, evidence-based information resource for building foundational knowledge on key topics.
- They must be able to augment that knowledge with the most current research and findings, so they can expand their knowledge and skills in real time.



Optimal care comes from current, trusted information

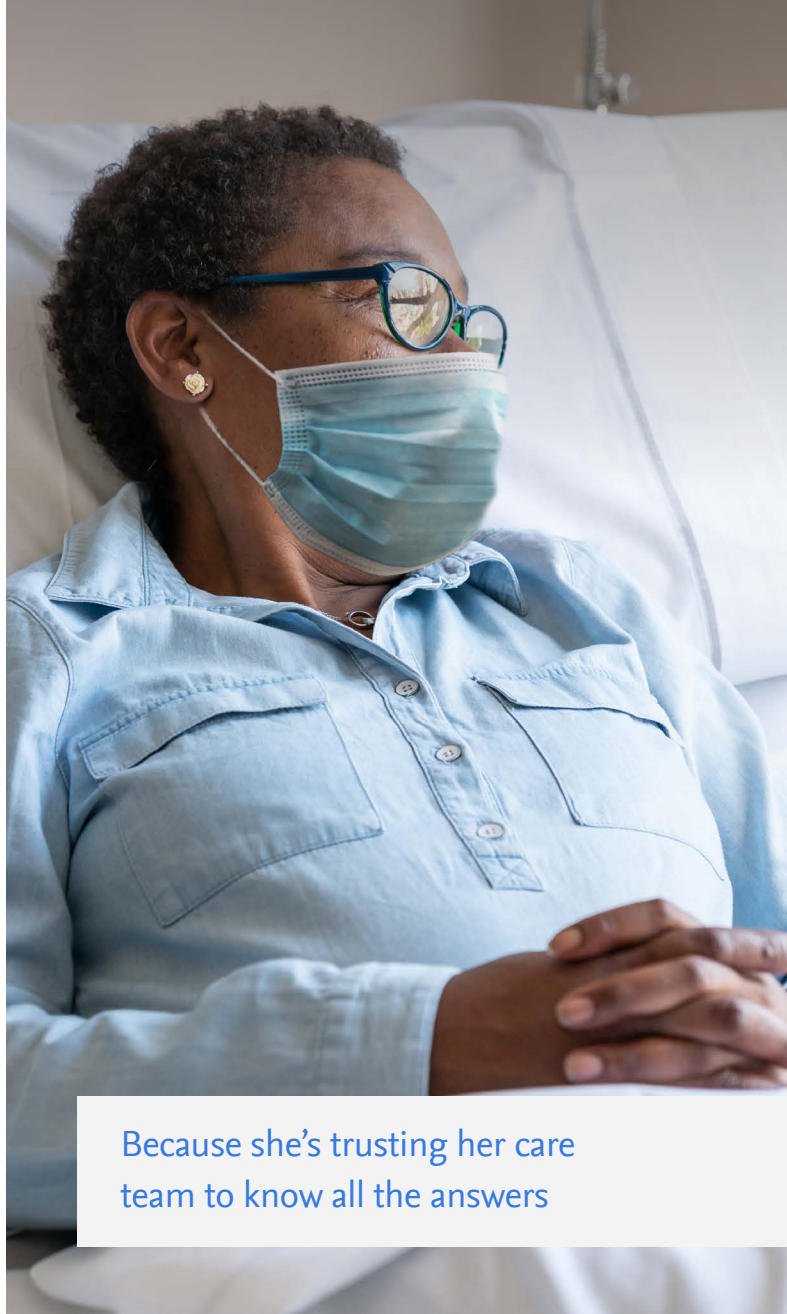
To address today's complex demands, healthcare leaders need to look beyond just making information available to clinicians and focus on what will improve clinical practice. This means arming care teams with evidence-based answers for all cases—whether for a junior practitioner or a seasoned specialist—across all disciplines. When teams utilize the same, trusted answers, they can ensure a more consistent patient experience that's based on medical evidence and the latest standards of care.

And that's why healthcare organizations are turning to Elsevier's ClinicalKey.

With ClinicalKey, best practices, treatment plans, or medication details are all available to the clinician at the point of care, allowing them to make recommendations based on the latest research.

And ClinicalKey also offers them the tools they need to dig deeper and explore unusual, rare or complex conditions. And because ClinicalKey content is continuously updated and approved by experienced, board-certified editors, the entire care team will rely less on incomplete or inaccurate sources, which will help improve patient outcomes.

This is how leading healthcare organizations are enhancing clinical practice through informed, confident decisions with ClinicalKey.



Because she's trusting her care team to know all the answers

For more information, visit elsevier.com/clinicalkey

1. *Randomized Trial for Answers to Clinical Questions: Evaluating a Pre-Appraised versus a MEDLINE Search Protocol*, Journal of the Medical Library Association, 2006
2. Medication Errors and Adverse Drug Events, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, August 2018



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