

Patient Engagement

Patient Engagement: Why Engaging Patients Early Leads to Higher Sales and Lower Costs

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
The Medical Device Commercialization Challenge.....	4
The Economic Foundation and Market Forces.....	5
Patient Engagement Integration Across the Brand Lifecycle	7
Industry-Specific Applications.....	10
Implementation Framework for Patient Engagement.....	11
Measuring Commercial Success	13
The Path to Market Leadership.....	15
References.....	17

Executive Summary

The medical device industry stands at an inflection point. Traditional provider-focused commercialization strategies often prove insufficient in an era of value-based care, increased patient autonomy, and heightened regulatory scrutiny. However, companies that prioritize patient engagement as a core commercialization strategy often achieve superior outcomes across key performance indicators.

This report examines how patient engagement drives medical device market success through a comprehensive analysis of its impact on every phase of product development and commercialization, as well as on specific device applications. Our research reveals that companies implementing authentic patient engagement strategies achieve 23% higher peak sales, reduce development costs by 15–20%, and accelerate regulatory approval by 3–6 months compared to traditional approaches.

The economic foundation for patient-centric commercialization has been strengthened by regulatory changes, such as the impact of the Orphan Drug Act on device development economics. And the rise of personalized therapies has created new drivers to understand patient needs, experiences, and decision-making processes.

The approaches presented in this report demonstrate how patient engagement can transform from a post-launch marketing tactic into a pre-launch strategic capability and a key brand differentiator. An implementation framework enables integration of patient engagement into design, manufacturing, and marketing. From concept through brand maturity, patient engagement creates sustainable competitive advantages for medical device companies that traditional marketing approaches cannot replicate.

Key findings include the importance of the “three-legged stool” approach, which integrates patients and caregivers, advocacy organizations, and healthcare providers into a unified advisory framework that begins with ideation and continues through development, manufacturing, and commercialization. This structure enables companies to build trust, validate assumptions, and accelerate market acceptance through community-driven adoption strategies.

The path to market leadership in tomorrow’s medical device landscape requires more than superior technology; it emphasizes the need for authentic patient partnership. Companies ready to embrace this transformation will find opportunities for brand growth, differentiation, and sustainable competitive edge.

The Medical Device Commercialization Challenge

The medical device industry faces commercialization challenges that traditional marketing approaches can't always adequately address. Market access barriers continue to rise as healthcare systems demand demonstrable value, while increasing competition fragments attention and raises customer acquisition costs. Regulators are looking beyond safety and efficacy, with an increasing interest in real-world evidence and patient-reported outcomes, which adds to the evidence companies must generate for successful market entry.

These pressures have created a commercialization paradox: devices may have superior clinical performance but still struggle to achieve market success. In contrast, products developed with authentic patient engagement can achieve breakthrough adoption rates, even in the face of intense competition. The difference lies in understanding that in today's medical device market, success depends on technological innovation and human connection.

Traditional launch approaches focus on clinical evidence, key opinion leader engagement, and education of healthcare providers. While these elements remain vital, they address only half of the commercialization equation. The other half — understanding real unmet patient needs, building community trust, and creating authentic value propositions — requires a different approach that integrates patient voices, ideally beginning in the earliest phases of brand strategy and continuing through development and launch.

Another challenge to traditional approaches is that the shift to patient-inclusive decision-making in healthcare has accelerated over the past decade. Patients are increasingly researching treatment options independently, participating in clinical decisions, and influencing healthcare provider choices through advocacy organizations and peer networks. Meeting their evolving need for an active role in their healthcare requires commercialization strategies that engage patients as strategic partners rather than passive recipients of medical technology.

An integrated approach to commercialization recognizes that successful device launches usually require alignment between technical excellence, manufacturing capability, and authentic patient engagement, which becomes part of a brand's ethos and way of working. When companies combine these disciplines from the earliest ideation phase, they can build market validation alongside technical validation, reducing commercialization risk while accelerating adoption.

The economic case for patient-centric commercialization becomes compelling when viewed through the lens of risk mitigation and competitive differentiation. Companies that embrace authentic patient engagement can create sustainable advantages that competitors using traditional approaches can't easily replicate. These advantages can compound over time, creating market leadership positions that persist across product lifecycles.

The following analysis examines the benefits of transforming patient engagement from a post-launch marketing activity into a strategic capability that drives superior commercial outcomes.

The Economic Foundation and Market Forces

The economic landscape for medical device commercialization has been reshaped by regulatory changes that incentivize patient-centric development approaches. For example, the Orphan Drug Act, originally designed for pharmaceutical development, has influenced device development economics by encouraging focus on specialized patient populations rather than mass markets.

Under the Orphan Drug Act framework, companies developing solutions for patient populations under 200,000 receive meaningful economic incentives, including 25% federal tax credits for clinical research, waiver of PDUFA fees up to \$3 million, and seven years of market exclusivity.

This regulatory benefit has created new economic dynamics that favor patient engagement strategies. Specialized devices require a deeper understanding of patient experiences, preferences, and outcomes than mass-market solutions. The traditional approach of developing devices based on clinical specifications without patient input is often economically inefficient when targeting smaller, more defined patient populations.

In general, the FDA has taken the position that patient engagement holds value in the development of medical devices and has provided guidance to support patient engagement efforts, such as “Patient Engagement in the Design and Conduct of Medical Device Clinical Studies.” The Division of Patient-Centered Development’s mission is to “engage with patients, understand their perspectives, and proactively integrate the patients’ perspectives into the total product life cycle of medical devices to help protect and promote public health.”

The global patient engagement solutions market includes digital tools and platforms that facilitate communication, information sharing, and active participation in treatment plans. That market, valued at \$27.6 billion in 2024 and projected to reach \$86.7 billion by 2030, reflects the growing recognition of the strategic value of patient engagement. However, most companies still invest in these solutions during the commercialization phase, rather than in earlier development stages, where patient insights can provide maximum value.

Cost Analysis: Patient Engagement ROI vs. Traditional Marketing

A comprehensive analysis reveals that patient engagement investments yield superior returns compared to traditional marketing approaches across multiple dimensions.

Development cost reduction: Companies that implement early patient engagement report a 15–20% reduction in total development costs through the early identification of design issues, reduced regulatory delays, and fewer post-launch modifications. For a typical Class II device requiring \$2–5 million in development investment, this translates to \$300,000–1,000,000 in direct cost savings.

Regulatory acceleration: Patient-informed submissions reduce FDA approval timelines by an average of 3 to 6 months. For devices with a projected peak annual revenue of \$10 million, this acceleration represents \$2.5–5 million in additional revenue opportunity during the first year post-approval.

Market adoption enhancement: Devices developed with authentic patient engagement achieve 25–40% higher adoption rates in their first two years compared to traditionally developed competitors. This advantage stems from better product-market fit, stronger value propositions, and community advocacy that accelerates word-of-mouth adoption.

Competitive moat creation: Patient relationships established during development can create switching costs and loyalty that competitors struggle to overcome. These advantages persist throughout the product lifecycle, generating cumulative value that exceeds initial patient engagement investments.

The economic model becomes even more compelling when considering the opportunity cost of failed launches. Industry research indicates that 70% of medical device launches fail to achieve projected revenue targets. An insufficient understanding of real patient needs and market dynamics can be a driver of that failure. Patient engagement provides market intelligence that can improve the probability of launch success.

Traditional vs. Patient-Centric Investment Comparison

Traditional commercialization approaches typically allocate 60–70% of marketing budgets to healthcare provider education, key opinion leader programs, and the generation of clinical evidence. Patient-centric approaches reallocate 30–40% of these investments toward patient engagement, community building, and the collection of real-world evidence.

This reallocation can generate superior returns because patient engagement creates multiple value streams simultaneously: market validation, competitive intelligence, regulatory support, adoption acceleration, and long-term loyalty. Traditional approaches usually generate value primarily through provider awareness and preference, which is often countered by competitive clinical data or pricing strategies.

The increasing shift toward value-based healthcare reimbursement further strengthens the economic case for patient engagement. Payers often require evidence of patient-reported outcomes, quality-of-life improvements, and real-world effectiveness. Patient engagement strategies should include plans to systematically generate the desired evidence as part of the relationship-building process.

Patient Engagement Integration Across the Brand Lifecycle

Successful patient engagement requires strategic integration across each phase of the brand lifecycle. Each phase — pre-launch, brand launch, brand growth, brand establishment, and brand maturity — presents unique opportunities to build patient relationships, generate market intelligence, and create competitive advantages that compound over time.

Pre-Launch: Market Validation and User Research

The pre-launch phase represents the most significant opportunity for patient engagement. During this period, companies have maximum flexibility to incorporate patient insights into product design, positioning, and commercialization strategies while development costs remain manageable.

Patient Advisory Framework

Effective pre-launch patient engagement utilizes a “three-legged stool” approach that integrates distinct but complementary patient communities:

Patients and Caregivers: The individuals who will ultimately use or be affected by the device bring essential real-world perspectives on daily challenges, existing solution limitations, and outcomes that matter most for quality of life. Patients serve as experts in their own experience, providing insights that clinical research cannot replicate. And caregivers, who are often the device users, offer a unique understanding and expertise.

Advocacy Organizations: Established patient advocacy groups provide institutional knowledge, community reach, and credibility that companies can leverage. These organizations understand the competitive landscape, have relationships with key opinion leaders, and can provide access to broader patient populations for validation and feedback.

Healthcare Providers: Clinical professionals contribute knowledge on workflow integration, safety considerations, and the practical constraints of healthcare system implementation. They help translate patient needs into technical requirements while identifying operational challenges.

Early Market Intelligence Generation

Pre-launch patient engagement can generate critical market intelligence that shapes development priorities and commercialization strategy. Medical device companies can validate value propositions by testing core assumptions about user needs and benefit priorities before committing development resources. Understanding patient perspectives on existing solutions, switching barriers, and unmet needs helps with analyzing the competitive landscape.

Regulatory Evidence Planning

Companies can plan to generate effective and increasingly required regulatory evidence by identifying patient-reported outcomes and real-world evidence necessary for successful submissions. They can also develop a successful reimbursement strategy by creating payer value propositions from patient and provider perspectives.

Brand Launch: Community-Driven Adoption Strategies

The launch phase leverages relationships and insights developed during pre-launch to accelerate market adoption through authentic community advocacy. Patients who are engaged during development can become natural advocates, providing credible testimonials and driving word-of-mouth adoption within their networks.

Trust-Based Adoption Acceleration

Patient communities engaged early in the development process have already developed trust in and an understanding of the device's value proposition. This trust can translate into faster adoption because education occurs gradually through development participation rather than through intensive launch communications, and concerns and objections are addressed through ongoing dialogue rather than reactive customer service. Additionally, value propositions can be validated through real patient experiences rather than theoretical marketing claims, and companies can activate community networks through existing relationships rather than relying on cold outreach efforts.

Authentic Content and Messaging

Patient-engaged launches can benefit from authentic content created collaboratively with patient communities rather than traditional marketing materials created for patients. This content resonates because it employs patient-friendly language, addresses genuine concerns, and reflects real-life experiences.

Brand Growth: Scaling Patient Advocacy for Market Expansion

The growth phase focuses on scaling successful patient engagement approaches to reach broader markets while maintaining the authenticity and trust that drove initial success. This requires systematic expansion of patient networks and development of scalable engagement platforms.

Successfully engaged patient communities expand through peer-to-peer recommendation and advocacy. Companies can accelerate this network effect amplification by facilitating patient-to-patient connections through online communities, support groups, and educational events, and by providing tools and resources that make it easy for satisfied patients to share their experiences. They can also create structured referral programs that reward patient advocacy while maintaining authenticity, and develop training programs that help engaged patients become effective community educators.

Brand Establishment: Building Competitive Moats Through Relationships

The establishment phase leverages accrued patient relationships to create sustainable competitive advantages that are difficult for competitors to replicate. These advantages include patient loyalty, community advocacy, and market intelligence that continues to inform innovation.

Patient relationships built over multiple commercialization phases can create sustainable competitive moats by increasing switching costs. Patients who are invested in relationships and educational processes often resist switching to competitive products. Established patient communities become increasingly valuable as they grow, strengthening the network effect and creating barriers to competitive entry. Ongoing patient relationships can also provide intelligence for next-generation product development. Patient advocacy facilitates market access by providing support for reimbursement applications and engaging in policy discussions.

Brand Maturity: Innovation Pipeline Informed by Patient Insights

The maturity phase utilizes accumulated patient insights to drive innovation pipeline development and lifecycle management decisions. Long-term patient relationships can provide valuable intelligence about evolving needs, competitive threats, and market opportunities.

Mature patient engagement programs can provide ongoing innovation intelligence through real-world usage data, which has the potential to reveal improvement opportunities not visible in clinical settings and identify evolving needs as patient populations and treatment landscapes change. Other benefits include competitive intelligence on new entrants and alternative approaches, as well as market opportunity assessments for adjacent applications and expanded indications.

Industry-Specific Applications

Patient engagement strategies should be tailored to the specific characteristics and requirements of different medical device categories. Each segment presents unique opportunities and challenges that require customized approaches while maintaining core principles of authentic partnership and trust-building.

Diagnostics

Companies with point-of-care testing and home diagnostic devices often face unique challenges in building patient confidence and ensuring proper usage. Patient engagement for diagnostics focuses on education, accuracy validation, and workflow integration.

Building Trust in Home-Based Diagnostics

Home diagnostic devices require patients to trust their accuracy and act on the results without immediate oversight from a healthcare provider. Patient engagement can help companies build this trust through transparency about accuracy limitations and appropriate use cases, education about result interpretation and when to seek professional consultation, user experience optimization based on real-world usage patterns, and community support networks for sharing experiences and troubleshooting.

Creating Value in Professional Diagnostics

Companies with healthcare provider-facing diagnostic devices can benefit from patient engagement that helps them demonstrate clinical value and workflow benefits. Patient outcome documentation can demonstrate the diagnostic impact on treatment decisions, while workflow integration studies may show efficiency improvements. And companies can use patient satisfaction evidence to support adoption and reimbursement applications.

Therapeutics

Companies with therapeutic devices, particularly those requiring regular patient interaction, can benefit from engagement strategies that optimize user experience and adherence.

Adherence-Driven Device Design

Patient engagement for therapeutic devices focuses on understanding real-world usage patterns and barriers to consistent use. Companies can gain insight into the integration of a device into daily routines based on patient lifestyle analysis and into burden reduction strategies informed by patient feedback on usage challenges. They can also develop motivation and reward systems that encourage long-term adherence, as well as support systems that include caregiver engagement.

Patient Journey Optimization

Therapeutic devices often accompany patients through complex treatment journeys. Patient engagement helps companies optimize these experiences through treatment pathway mapping from a patient's perspective, transition point support during care setting changes, outcome tracking and feedback that demonstrates progress and value, and peer support facilitation that connects patients with similar experiences.

Digital Health

Digital health devices and platforms require patient engagement strategies that address technology adoption barriers, privacy concerns, and integration with existing healthcare routines.

User Experience as Competitive Differentiator

Digital health success can depend on user experience optimization informed by real patient usage patterns. Through patient usability testing, companies can validate interface designs and prioritize features based on actual usage analytics and patient feedback. User experience data can also help optimize integration with existing healthcare apps and workflows, as well as privacy and security communications that build trust with patients without creating anxiety.

Community Building Around Health Technology

Patient communities can offer mutual support and shared learning opportunities for users of digital health platforms. The benefits include peer support integration within digital platforms, co-creation of educational content with experienced patient users, facilitation of data sharing that benefits both individual patients and the broader community, and integration of healthcare providers that bridges digital and traditional care.

Implementation Framework for Patient Engagement

A successful implementation framework for integrated patient engagement ensures that patient insights are systematically incorporated into design decisions, manufacturing processes, and marketing strategies. Companies can create comprehensive commercialization strategies that maximize patient engagement value while maintaining operational efficiency. Such a systematic approach ensures that patient insights are integrated into processes throughout the entire product lifecycle from the initial concept through post-launch optimization.

Patient engagement activities should synchronize with development milestones to provide timely insights when they can have maximum impact:

- Concept validation through patient need assessment and value proposition testing
- Design review integration with patient feedback on prototypes and user interfaces
- Clinical study design informed by patient-reported outcome priorities and real-world usage patterns
- Launch readiness assessment, including patient community preparedness and advocacy development

An integrated approach to patient engagement also calls for internal change. Team members involved in device development and commercialization should understand patient inputs and their implications for their respective disciplines. This includes regular patient insight sharing across design, manufacturing, and marketing teams, as well as decision framework alignment that prioritizes patient value in trade-off decisions. Companies can create performance measurements that include patient satisfaction and engagement metrics, focusing on continuous improvement based on ongoing patient feedback and relationship development.

Patient-Informed Design

Patient engagement insights can directly influence design decisions through user interface optimization based on real-world usage patterns and preferences, as well as through form factor refinement informed by patient lifestyle and mobility requirements. Companies can prioritize features in alignment with patient-defined value propositions and enhance safety and usability through patient feedback on prototype interactions.

Companies can also strengthen regulatory submissions with human factors evidence generated through authentic patient interaction rather than laboratory testing and real-world evidence collection that demonstrates patient value beyond clinical endpoints. They can also take advantage of risk-benefit assessments that incorporate patient perspectives on acceptable trade-offs, as well as post-market surveillance that leverages patient relationships for ongoing safety monitoring.

Manufacturing Flexibility for Patient Needs

Manufacturing strategies can incorporate patient engagement insights to ensure production capabilities align with market requirements. Companies should seek manufacturers that can develop customizations to meet patient-specific requirements and integrate quality systems that capture patient feedback to inform improvement processes. The supply chain should be optimized for patient-critical device availability, and packaging and distribution should be designed around patient convenience and storage needs.

Marketing Strategy Alignment

Companies can build marketing strategies on a patient engagement foundation rather than on traditional demographic or clinical targeting. With this approach, they can develop messaging using authentic patient language and priorities and select marketing channels based on patient community preferences and behaviors. They can also create content that reflects real patient experiences and outcomes and leverage nurtured relationships to maintain engagement throughout the product lifecycle.

Brand Strategy Aligned with User Experience

Brand strategy and user experience can be aligned through shared patient insights and coordinated implementation across all customer touchpoints. An integrated brand strategy incorporates patient engagement insights to create authentic positioning that resonates with the real needs of patients. Companies can coordinate their brand purpose, vision, mission, and promise with patient-defined value propositions and develop brand assets that reflect the patient community's preferences and accessibility requirements. In this way, the messaging platform is built on patient language and communication preferences, and the user experience design can deliver on brand promises through every patient interaction.

Measuring Commercial Success

Effective patient engagement strategies require measurement frameworks that capture both immediate commercial impact and long-term relationship value. Traditional metrics, such as market share and revenue growth, provide an incomplete picture of patient engagement success. Patient engagement also creates intangible assets that drive a sustainable competitive advantage.

Market Adoption Acceleration Metrics

Patient engagement success should be measured across multiple dimensions that reflect the comprehensive value created through authentic patient relationships.

Quantitative Performance Indicators

- **Time to market penetration:** Patient-engaged launches typically achieve 25% market penetration 3–6 months faster than traditional approaches
- **Customer acquisition cost reduction:** Community-driven adoption reduces acquisition costs by 30–50% compared to traditional marketing approaches
- **Market share growth rate:** Patient-engaged devices achieve 15–25% higher peak market share in their therapeutic categories
- **Revenue per patient:** Authentic patient relationships support premium pricing and reduce price sensitivity

Adoption Pattern Analysis

Patient engagement creates distinctive adoption patterns that can be measured and optimized:

- **Network effect acceleration:** The rate at which satisfied patients influence new adoptions within their networks
- **Geographic penetration speed:** How quickly adoption spreads across geographic markets through patient advocacy
- **Provider adoption correlation:** The relationship between patient demand and healthcare provider adoption decisions
- **Competitive response resistance:** Patient loyalty that persists despite competitive product introductions

Brand Value Enhancement Through Patient Advocacy

Patient advocacy creates brand value that extends beyond immediate sales impact to include market positioning, competitive differentiation, and long-term relationship assets.

Brand Equity Measurement

- **Patient trust scores:** Regular assessment of patient confidence and trust in the brand and its products

- **Advocacy rate tracking:** The percentage of patients who actively recommend products to peers and healthcare providers
- **Brand association strength:** Patient perception of brand attributes compared to competitive alternatives
- **Reputation resilience:** Brand stability during challenging periods or competitive attacks

Community Value Assessment

- **Community growth rates:** Expansion of patient networks and engagement levels over time
- **Engagement quality metrics:** Depth and frequency of patient interactions beyond product usage
- **Content contribution:** Patient-generated content, testimonials, and educational materials
- **Peer influence measurement:** The impact of engaged patients on broader community adoption decisions

Long-Term Competitive Advantage Indicators

The most valuable patient engagement outcomes create sustainable competitive advantages that compound over time and resist replication by competitors.

Relationship Asset Evaluation

- **Patient lifetime value:** Total commercial value generated through long-term patient relationships
- **Switching cost assessment:** The difficulty and expense competitors face in winning engaged patients
- **Network effect strength:** The increasing value of patient communities as they grow and mature
- **Innovation pipeline intelligence:** The quality and uniqueness of insights generated through patient relationships

Market Position Sustainability

- **Competitive response analysis:** How effectively patient relationships protect against competitive threats
- **Market share stability:** The persistence of market position advantages during competitive pressure
- **Pricing power maintenance:** The ability to maintain premium pricing through patient value delivery
- **Expansion opportunity creation:** New market opportunities identified through patient relationship insights

Investment Return Measurement

Patient engagement investments should be evaluated across multiple time horizons to capture both immediate and cumulative returns:

- **Short-term ROI (1–2 years):** Direct cost savings, acceleration benefits, and immediate adoption improvements
- **Medium-term value (3–5 years):** Market share gains, competitive advantage development, and brand equity enhancement
- **Long-term assets (5+ years):** Relationship portfolio value, innovation pipeline contributions, and sustainable market leadership

The Path to Market Leadership

The future of medical device development is promising for companies that understand patients aren't just end users — they're strategic partners whose insights drive innovation, validate assumptions, and accelerate commercial success. The transformation from traditional device marketing to authentic patient engagement represents more than a tactical shift; it's a fundamental reimagining of how medical device companies create value and build sustainable brands.

The evidence presented throughout this analysis demonstrates that patient engagement delivers measurable commercial benefits across every phase of the device lifecycle. From 15–20% development cost reductions through early patient input to 23% higher peak sales through community-driven adoption, the financial case for patient-centric commercialization is compelling.

More importantly, patient engagement creates intangible assets that traditional marketing approaches alone can't replicate. Trusted relationships built through authentic partnerships often resist competitive pressure. Patient communities can provide ongoing market intelligence that informs innovation. And advocacy networks can accelerate adoption in ways that paid marketing can't achieve.

The regulatory environment is increasingly favoring patient-centric approaches, as the FDA considers real-world evidence and patient-reported outcomes in device evaluations. Reimbursement decisions increasingly depend on demonstrated patient value beyond clinical efficacy measures. These trends will only accelerate as healthcare systems focus more intensively on value-based care and the quality of patient experience.

An integrated approach, combining design, manufacturing, and marketing, provides a framework for capturing patient engagement value while maintaining operational efficiency and technical excellence. By integrating patient insights across all internal disciplines throughout the product lifecycle, companies can build market leadership positions that persist across product generations.

Medical device companies seeking to develop strong brands and achieve success can engage patients as strategic partners from the outset, building solutions that meet the needs of the market. In an industry where a single development misstep can cost millions and delay market entry by years, patient engagement is evolving into a competitive necessity.

The companies that will dominate tomorrow's medical device markets are already building patient relationships today. They understand that in a world of accelerating technological change and increasing healthcare complexity, the human element becomes more valuable, not less. Empathy, trust, and authentic partnership with patients may well be the sustainable competitive advantages that will define market leadership in the decades ahead.

The opportunity has never been greater. Patient engagement tools, platforms, and methodologies are more accessible than ever. And patient communities are eager to partner with companies that demonstrate a genuine commitment to their needs and experiences. Additionally, regulatory and reimbursement environments are increasingly rewarding patient-centric approaches.

The question is no longer whether companies should engage patients. It's how quickly they can start building meaningful relationships that will drive commercial success.

For medical device companies ready to adopt patient-centric commercialization, the path forward requires a commitment to authenticity and systematic implementation. But for those willing to make this transformation, the rewards can include not just excellent financial performance, but the satisfaction of knowing their work genuinely improves lives through technology designed with and for the people it serves.

The future of medical device commercialization is patient-centric. The time to begin is now.

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This report synthesizes insights from primary research, industry analysis, academic literature, and proprietary Boyd Biomedical research to provide a comprehensive analysis of patient engagement's role in medical device commercialization success.