Looking Back to Move Forward: The Next Decade and Beyond for Human Experience

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EDITORIAL

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Jason A. Wolf

The Beryl Institute / Patient Experience Journal

ABSTRACT

This issue comes out at an important moment for the experience conversation. It was ten years ago from the publication date of this issue on April 30, 2014, that the first issue of Patient Experience Journal (PXJ) was released. PXJ was intended to be a gathering place. A virtual town square for the experience movement where people could and would come together to share ideas and proven practice. This value of collaboration is at the foundation of our very efforts as a global community through The Beryl Institute. Experience is not some secret competitive ingredient in the world of healthcare. It is a promise we make to one another – to what matters to patients, to the needs of the healthcare workforce, to the realities faced by the communities that healthcare serves. What sparked us to start this effort over a decade ago is what continues to inspire us on the journey of where we go from here.

Keywords: Patient experience, Human experience, Healthcare, Global, Commitment, Innovation, Anniversary

1. Celebration and gratitude

This issue comes out at an important moment for the experience conversation. It was ten years ago from the publication date of this issue on April 30, 2014, that the first issue of Patient Experience Journal (PXJ) was released. It was published with an intention to create a home for evidence that was accessible, to foster and support research and practice, and to expand the global experience conversation. Our hope was to create a space where all voices could contribute from those of patients and care partners, to professionals, to academics, and more. And they have.

PXJ was intended to be a gathering place. A virtual town square for the experience movement where people could and would come together to share ideas and proven practice. This idea is a value at the foundation of our very efforts as a global community through The Beryl Institute. I am proud and grateful to say this commitment to collaboration is exemplified in what so many of you choose to do.

Experience is not some secret competitive ingredient in the world of healthcare. It is a promise we make to one another – to what matters to patients, to the needs of the healthcare workforce, to the realities faced by the communities that healthcare serves. What sparked us to start this effort over a decade ago is what continues to inspire us on the journey of where we go from here. That is why what you have seen in PXJ over the last ten years are more than just words on pages. Rather, the contributions from hundreds of authors around the world reflect a commitment to action and a belief in a shared purpose that we can and truly must make healthcare better for all it serves and all who serve.
2. A new decade

As we start the next decade of PXJ, we also continue to make improvements in support of our authors and readers. This issue reveals a new look and format for our articles, and other big updates are on the way. In the months ahead, you will see a new submission platform to ease the process for authors and reviewers. This change comes in a time when academic journals continue to work diligently to honor the contributions of those who submit articles as well as the thoughtful feedback provided by those who take the time to offer reviews. You will also see changes on the PXJ site itself to create a more dynamic interface with articles, supporting content, and more.

We have always believed that academic publishing must be accessible. It is why we remain fully open access, have no processing fees for authors, and maintain a committed focus on ‘patients included’. It is why we also encourage and support research from practice as well. Some of the greatest innovations in our field have come from studies conducted at the point of care.

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It is this rich and vibrant weaving of research and practice through the collections of articles we publish that will continue to underline our overall commitment to “Evidence. Innovation. Patient Forward.” With that, our rigor remains clear, our intent true. In bringing the voices of our global community together in a way that people can contribute to and access evidence and new ideas, we not only expand knowledge but also push boundaries, impact lives, and ultimately, work to make healthcare a little better each day.

That is what we again see on the pages of this issue. Volume 11, Issue 1 provides a historical review of our field and explores its roots in hundreds of years of evolution in healthcare. It brings us to present day with a clear value case on why we must commit to investing in human experience. It continues to include powerful personal narratives that help us see through the lenses of those who have lived experiences and lessons to share. The research presented covers a broad range of topics exploring issues of communication, social determinants of health, safety, reflection on the impact of COVID-19, and exploration of interprofessional collaboration.

In all, this issue also reflects the continued global engagement found on the pages of PXJ over our first ten years, with half of the articles that follow having lead authors from outside the United States. This fact is critical, as it reinforces the global nature of the experience conversation, the commitment of PXJ to engage voices around the globe, and the true reach that PXJ publications have had in our first decade. Overall, PXJ articles have now been accessed in almost 230 countries and territories around the world.

This reach is not insignificant, especially for authors seeking to ensure their articles are seen and read and contribute to the broader experience conversation and literature. While we remain inspired by the large number of citations our pieces have seen, a traditional academic measure of impact, we believe, coming back to our value of accessibility at our core, is how often our works are read, downloaded, and become catalysts for actions that people take to transform the human experience in healthcare. In fact, by the time of this publication, the 512 articles published in PXJ since April 30, 2014, will have been downloaded over one and a quarter million times. That means, on average, an article published on these pages has been accessed well over 2400 times. While some may be higher or lower, that represents the most significant impact of all. As people read these pages, the words they read make a difference. They are fostering learning and inspiring change. That was our greatest hope and intent from day one.

3. Looking back to look forward

In celebrating our tenth birthday, I also had an opportunity to share reflections on what we have seen in the last ten years and what it means for where we go from here. In just a few days following the publication of this issue, we will see the release of a new book, Transforming the Future of Healthcare: Reflections on a Decade of the Experience Movement. The book provides a summary and review of the first ten years of PXJ, through the things I shared in my editorials such as this. It serves as a view of where we have been and where we are going.

As I share in my introduction, the book “...reflects the arc of the decade. It frames the evolution of our movement that so many inquire about. It reveals where we are still challenged and shines light on new ideas that can lead us forward. All the while, it reinforces the common ideas...”
of “experience” that have remained true from our very first article 10 years ago: that we in healthcare remain human beings caring for human beings and that experience will always comprise the sum of all interactions at all touch points across the continuum of care.”

The point I share in the book is that in all we have learned, the reason we look back is to move forward. That we should build on the successes achieved, challenges faced, and lessons learned. I also suggest we reframe our lens on what we mean in calling ourselves an experience movement. In movement, we are not suggesting the word as a noun, yet while we are a social movement, movements of this type aspire or lead to some end, some finality.

I have always asserted that experience in its very nature has no terminal point. In framing the experience movement in that way, I believe a commitment to and focus on experience is about continuity. That is our movement, that is the experience movement. It is a noble “endeavor in constant motion.”

The experience movement …is a noble endeavor in constant motion.

In closing the book, I proposed ten actions for the future of human experience, and while I will not share them all here, I do think it fitting as we open the next decade of PXJ to leave you with the final idea. We must work to weave the experience world closer. With that action, I wrote, “The connecting of leaders in shared advocacy is all about what brought us together in our community and through PXJ to start. In creating a space that connects people, inspires them to share, creates a place to learn, and does so with openness and inclusivity, we bring people a little bit closer. In doing so with intention and through invitation, we create a space that people can step into and call their own. Even through the deepest of differences—culturally, economically, and more—this work must be about bringing the experience world and our world in general closer.”

That is the opportunity we have in front of us. That even through the challenges we have faced and the differences that have been elevated around the world, through the attempts to dampen inclusivity, restrict access, and diminish voices, we can and must stand stronger. That is what our work is about. That is what transforming the human experience must be about.

The pages of PXJ represent, in the traditional sense, a well-read, cited and respected academic publication, but what they reflect in all we have published and in all that is to come is so much more. They present a worldview of hope, a commitment to humanity, a belief in possibility, and an elevation of purpose. If we remain true to the idea that at the heart of healthcare – and our humanness in general – we are human beings caring for human beings – then in every attempt to elevate knowledge, share practice, and tell our stories, we are adding positive ripples of hope that will truly transform healthcare and impact lives.

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That is what brings us back here to these pages in PXJ, that is what our reflections on the decade reveal, and that is where the future will lead. A future that will be built on the steps we take forward, together.

References

