Awareness

Patient Experience

Awareness / Inciting Event

Elaine, 77, has lived in Santa Barbara for decades. Since her husband's passing, she stays active and visits her grandchildren but feels her world shrinking. At her annual exam, concerning test results lead her primary care provider to refer her to an interventional cardiologist at Cottage's Women's Heart Clinic. Hearing that she could see a specialist who focuses on women's cardiovascular health makes Elaine feel both nervous and hopeful.

Needs

Elaine needs reassurance, continuity across her care providers, and holistic guidance on healthy aging.

Pain Point

Limited social connection and increasing health needs make aging feel isolating.

Cottage Experience

Description

The referral from Elaine's outside primary care provider arrives electronically but without supporting lab files. Elaine's insurance is authorized by the Call Navigation Center (CNC). Cottage staff tracks down her recent results and needed information in Care Everywhere to schedule her visit.

People Involved

CNC

Systems Involved

Care Everywhere | Epic- Referrals

Pain Point

Incomplete records from outside providers require manual follow-up before visits can be scheduled.

Seeking Treatment

Patient Experience

Women's Heart Clinic Visit

Elaine meets an interventional cardiologist who explains her test results and shows mild plaque buildup, reassuring her that no procedure is needed but stressing the importance of managing blood pressure, cholesterol, and stress. Elaine feels relieved yet unsure how to make lasting changes. When she asks about supplements or strength training, the cardiologist shares that she doesn't have many resources to share in those areas.

Needs

Elaine needs clear guidance on prevention and practical support for healthy lifestyle changes.

Pain Point

Specialty care focuses on risk education but offers few tools for day-to-day behavior change.

Cottage Experience

Description

Clinic staff provide standard discharge education and a printed packet of heart-healthy recipes. They wish they had a referral list for local fitness or nutrition programs for older women.

People Involved

Cardiologist

Systems Involved

Epic - Notes

Pain Point

Lack of integrated wellness and community-based referral options limit holistic care.

Patient Experience

Coordinating Care

A few weeks later, the clinic calls Elaine to repeat tests she thought were done. Confused, she agrees, unsure what was lost in the system. She's never been able to log in to MyChart, so when her daughter hears about the mix-up, she prints the lab results and mails them to her. Elaine brings the folder to her next visit, hoping it will help. Her doctor refers her back to MyChart, leaving her discouraged and uncertain how to manage her care.

Needs

Elaine needs seamless communication between her providers and clear, easy-to-understand health information.

Pain Point

Fragmented systems force patients to manage and repeat their own records.

Cottage Experience

Description

Elaine's cardiologist recommends regular follow-ups to monitor her blockage, but staff spend time chasing results across systems and confirming tests from Quest Diagnostics. Elaine sometimes forgets her labs, and even when she doesn't, records are hard to verify—frustrating both patients and providers.

People Involved

Cardiologist | Quest Diagnostics

Systems Involved

Epic- Care Everywhere | Phone Call

Pain Point

Disconnected EHRs lead to duplicate testing and wasted staff time.

Patient Experience

Urogynecology Referral

When Elaine mentions new urinary incontinence, her cardiologist refers her to Cottage's urogynecology clinic. She's grateful there's a women-focused service, but quickly grows exasperated by the process. Days pass as she waits for the urogynecologist's office to call to schedule with her, unsure why it's taking so long to schedule or approve her visit. When she finally meets the urogynecologist, she's relieved by the provider's kindness and reassured to learn her symptoms are common and treatable.

Needs

Elaine needs streamlined referral scheduling and compassionate communication throughout her care journey.

Pain Point

Delays in scheduling feel discouraging and confusing for older adults.

Cottage Experience

Description

Urogynecology receives electronic referrals via Epic. Clinic staff spend extra time calling patients directly to confirm visit needs. They value being able to see other Cottage specialists' notes in Epic, but lose visibility once care extends outside the network.

People Involved

Clinic Coordinator

Systems Involved

Epic - Referrals | Phone Call

Pain Point

High call volume and limited referral context reduce scheduling accuracy.

Outcome

Patient Experience

Resolution

Elaine appreciates the care she received at Cottage, but the coordination feels like work. Her children worry she's becoming withdrawn, so she decides to move to a retirement community along the Central Coast. There, she finds peers, nearby exercise classes, and on-site health services. Her retirement community helps her re-establish care with nearby offices or within their own network; she's happy that care is close by.

Needs

Elaine needs social connection, coordinated ongoing care, and accessible local resources

Pain Point

System leaves older adults to navigate social health and continuity on their own.

Cottage Experience

Description

Cottage providers are glad Elaine found care elsewhere but wish they could follow up. Once patients leave the system, updates rarely return, and tracking relies on memory and manual lists. Many older adults move on not for lack of care, but for stronger community care connections.

People Involved

Clinic Coordinators

Systems Involved

Epic- Patient Chart

Pain Point

Lack of post-discharge continuity tracking causes loss of visibility for aging patients.