

WebMD launches appointment booking, challenging competitors like Zocdoc

Article

The news: Health information company **WebMD** is teaming up with healthcare operations company **Symplr** to give WebMD website visitors direct access to provider search and

scheduling tools.

- WebMD users can now book appointments with Symplr's clients, including providers at large health systems like **Baystate Health** and **University of Tennessee Medical Center**.

Why a partnership with Symplr is a smart bet for WebMD: There's a high demand from health consumers for easy-to-use, online appointment schedulers—which means providers are willing to pay for these tools.

In fact, demand for online appointment scheduling has remained higher than demand for other digital health tech like telehealth over the past year.

Providers will likely be more interested in paying for digital tools like scheduling to cater to patient demand and keep their patients on board longer.

- Today's healthcare consumers aren't loyal and will opt for whichever provider offers them the best digital experience, including tech like scheduling: About **28% of patients** have either switched or stopped going to a healthcare provider because of a poor digital healthcare experience, per Cedar's 2020 survey.

Provider subscriptions are also a way for WebMD to secure revenues. For example, scheduling platforms like **Zocdoc** charge providers a flat fee for each new booking a practice receives. Plus, providers will likely be eager to get their primary care practice on WebMD's website, considering the amount of exposure it could provide: WebMD claims over **75 million** consumers access its site monthly to understand their health.

What's next? Appointment scheduling platforms like WebMD-Symplr's and Zocdoc's could become more valuable to consumers if they include more options for mental health appointments.

- **More than 95% of people** who booked a virtual visit via Zocdoc for mental health concerns rebook their visit with the same practice, per Zocdoc's recent trends report. That's likely because mental health visits require more frequent touchpoints than visiting your doctor for a primary care checkup.

Some mental health platforms are already recognizing the consumer demand for online mental health booking, and are expanding rapidly in response.

- For example, in July mental health matchmaking startup **SonderMind** scored **\$150 million** to expand its therapist network across all 50 states.
- That same month, Zocdoc partnered with mental health platform **Headway** to provide consumers with more affordable and accessible options.

