



# The role of in-app chat in providing exceptional patient experience

Guide for healthcare providers, insurers, and Health Tech companies





## Finding new ways to connect with patients in an increasingly digitalized world

Patient experience is a priority for healthcare providers and Health Tech companies.

According to a Deloitte-Scottsdale Institute survey<sup>1</sup> of health systems' digital transformation initiatives, consumer satisfaction and engagement is the #1 goal of investments for 92% of health systems providers.

As Accenture's research<sup>2</sup> puts it, evolving patient preferences show a need for healthcare transformation. **Younger generations are dissatisfied with certain aspects of traditional healthcare and will increasingly choose medical providers who offer digital capabilities.**

To improve their patients' experience, healthcare institutions are undertaking the following steps:

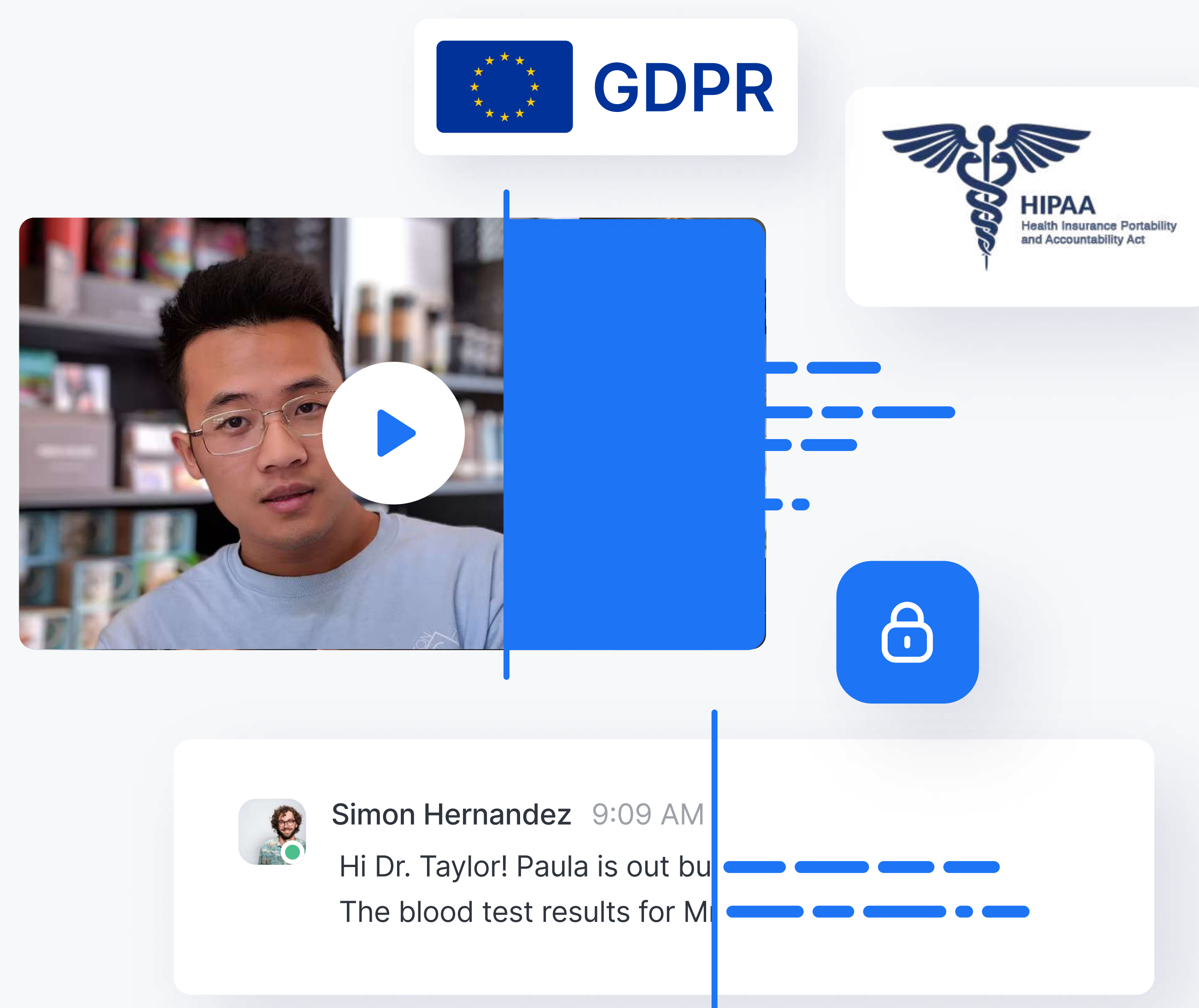
- Creating an engaging experience
- Paying attention to the patient
- Honoring patients with respect
- Improving communication in every step of the process
- Enabling easy access to healthcare services
- Improving timeliness.

Since the healthcare industry is increasingly digitalized, live chat presents a new communication channel with patients. Real-time conversations on live chat are substituting phones when scheduling doctor appointments, but they can also do much more.

This ebook discusses how in-app chat can **support healthcare institutions in providing an excellent patient experience without compromising patients' data privacy.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/digital-transformation-in-healthcare.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/health/todays-consumers-reveal-future-healthcare>





# In-app chat: a multifaceted solution for all healthcare-related businesses

In-app chat tools are already widely used in the healthcare industry. **They are the most suitable solution for meeting the increasing demand for real-time messaging between patients and providers.**

They can be implemented by:

- **Healthcare providers** such as hospitals, emergency rooms, clinics, and urgent care providers
- **Insurance companies**
- **Health tech** software companies

## Healthcare providers

A good in-app patient communications solution gives doctors, nurses, insurers, and other providers the tools they need to elevate care, especially when connected to other health tech solutions such as EHR and EMR.

**Realtime, in-app solutions like chat give patients an immediate, easier, and more intuitive way to understand their options, risks, and their medical coverage.**

They can be used for patient consultations, follow-ups, medication refills, nurse-to-patient interactions, admin-to-patient interactions, patient-to-on-demand medicine delivery services, and much more.





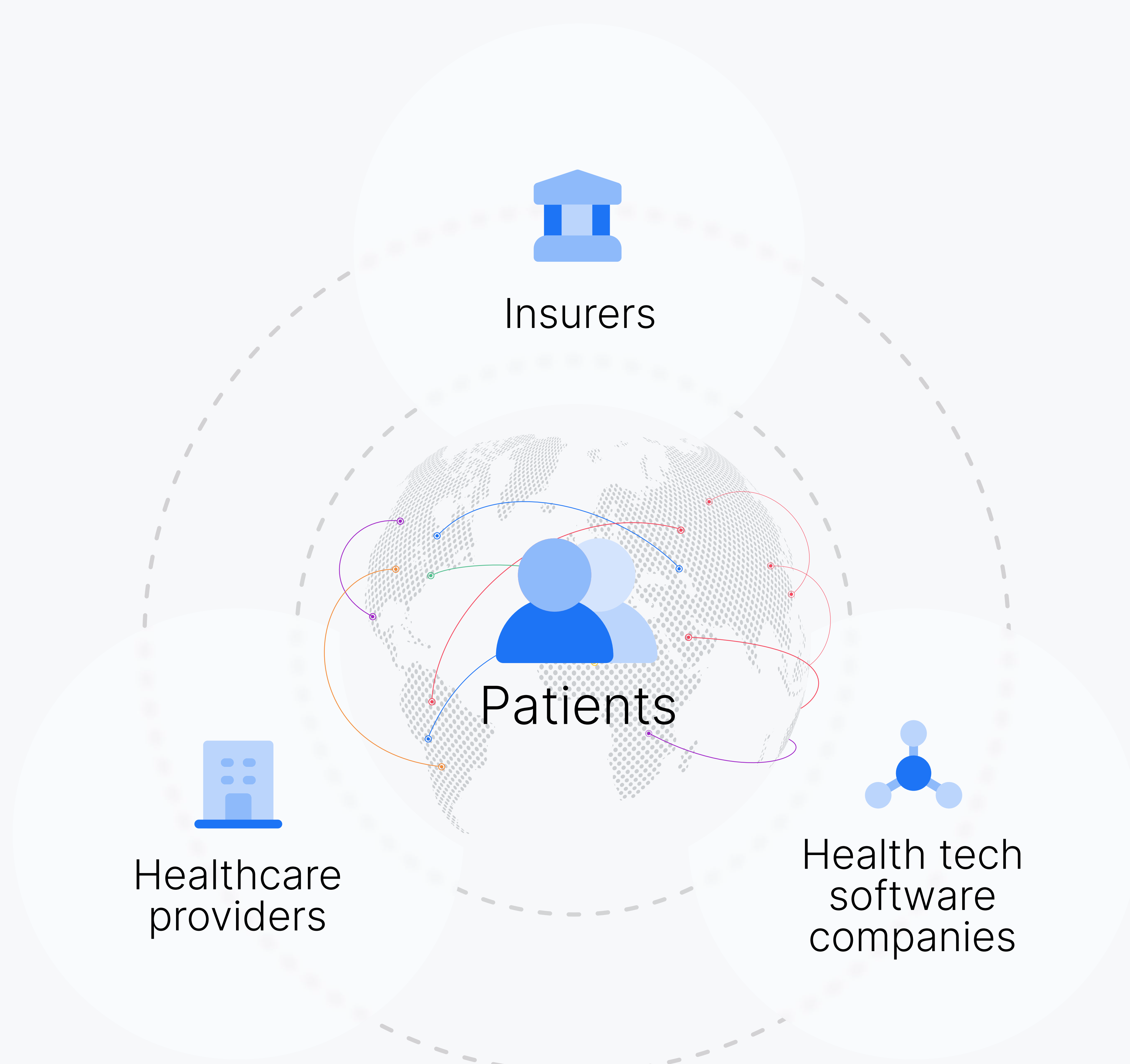
## Insurance companies

Insurance companies can use in-app chats to provide coverage information to patients as well as healthcare providers. Thus, they can significantly improve their customer support service, optimize patient experience, and reduce extensive operational costs.

## Health tech software companies

Various health tech companies such as patient scheduling or telemedicine software can use in-app chats to advance their existing solutions and make them more valuable to their end buyers.

Because building a **secure, HIPAA-ready in-app chat** is much harder and slower to build than implementing an existing one using APIs, many health tech providers choose to implement existing in-app chat providers such as Rocket.Chat.





# How can in-app chat be used to enhance the patient experience

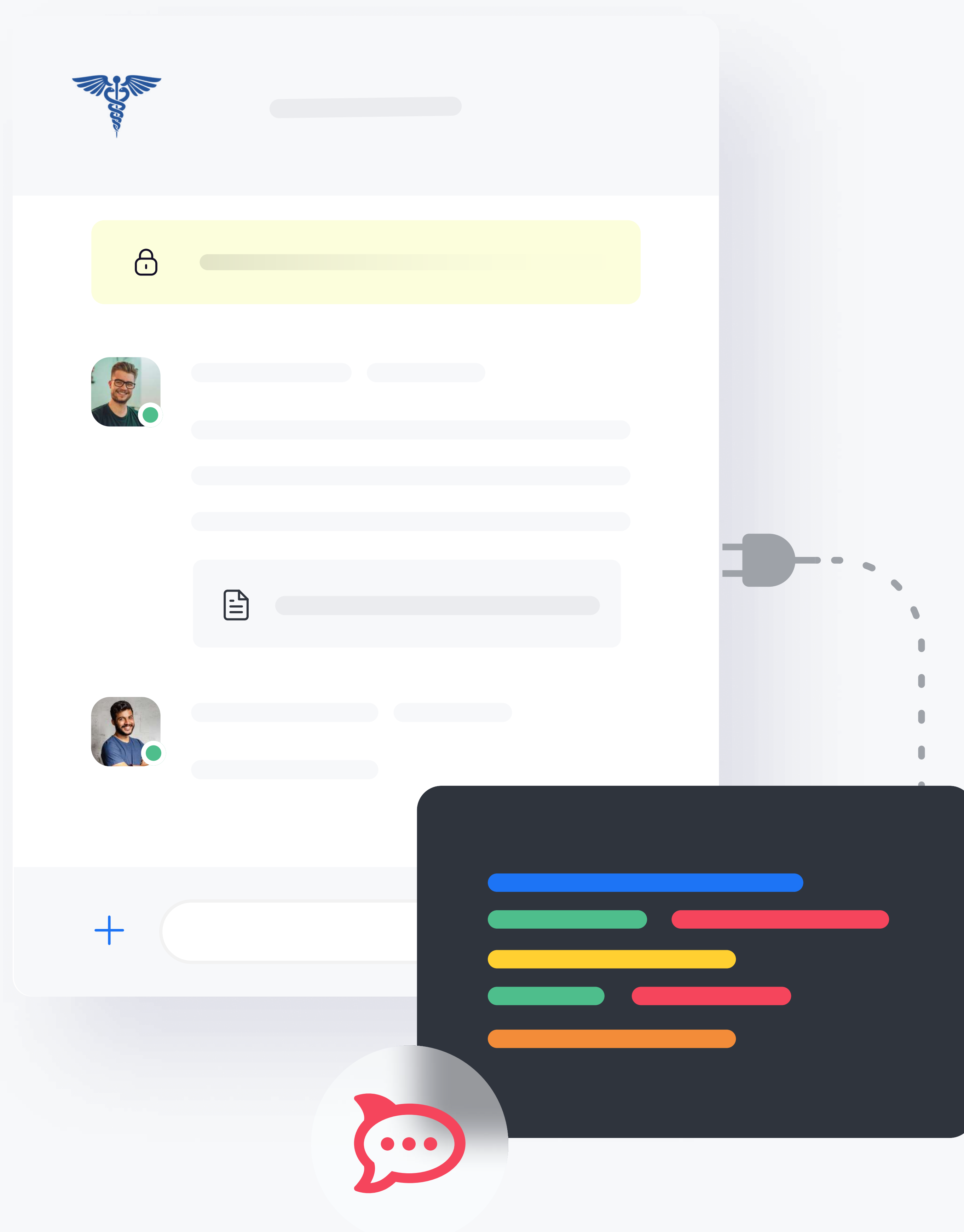
## Assistance with self-scheduling medical appointments

<sup>3</sup> <https://thehealthcareblog.com/blog/2015/03/24/patient-self-scheduling-2-0/>

Patients spend, on average, 8 minutes on the phone when scheduling a doctor's appointment. 63% of the time, patient calls are transferred<sup>3</sup>, and a lot of time is spent being on hold.

Patient self-scheduling software is a great way to overcome the long waits. **With live in-app chat, you can support patients who are self-scheduling calls but experience difficulties using the software.**

Chatbots can help patients resolve their issues faster or get in touch with customer service in case of complications.



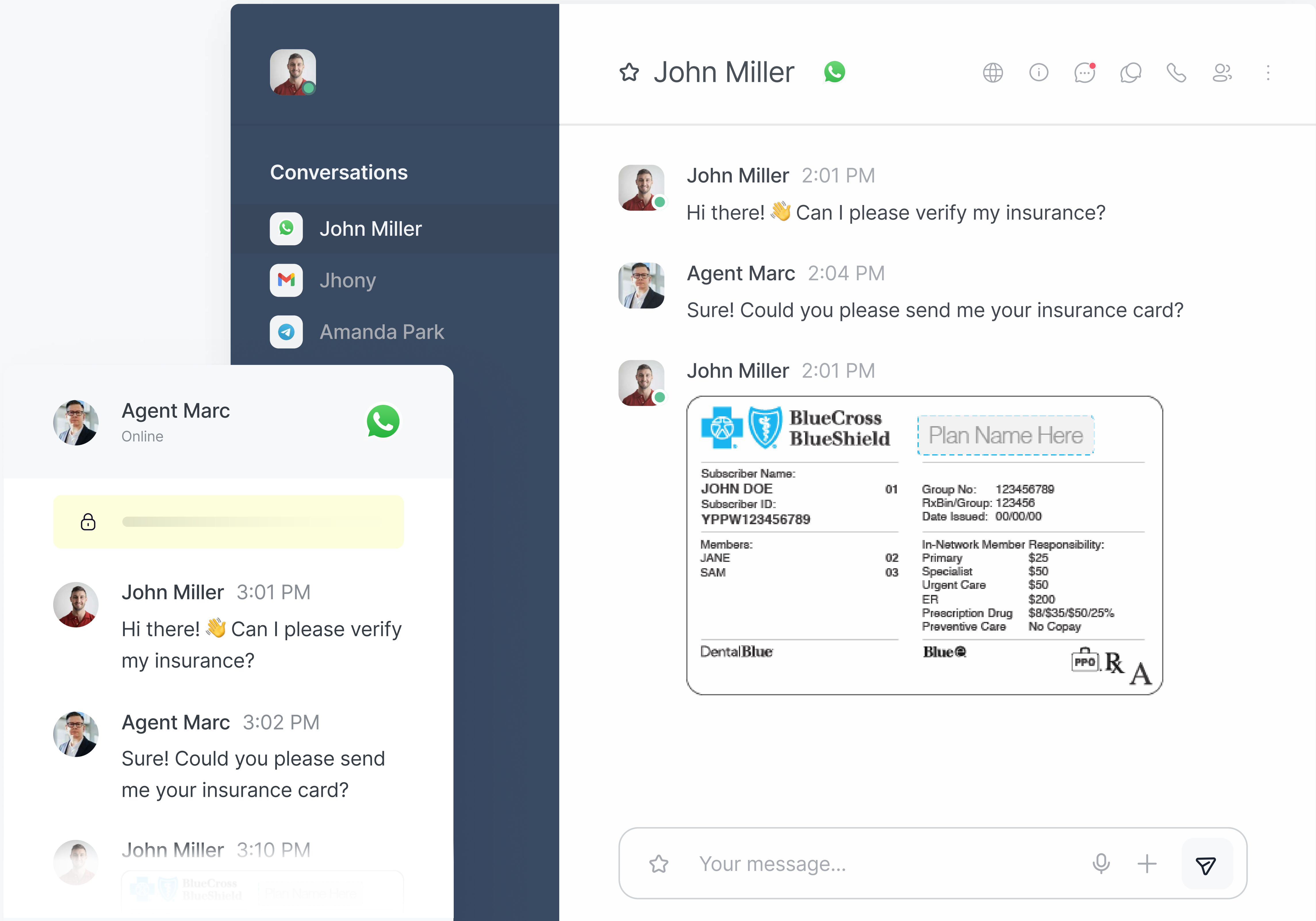


# Provide medical information

Chatbots can be trained with public datasets to answer patients' questions on disease symptoms, available treatments, and medical examinations. Moreover, in-app chat solutions can send lab results and other physical exams. For example, patients that take COVID-19 tests can get their results via in-app chat.

# Request prescription refills and manage insurance details

Prescription refills have to go through the doctor's hands, but chatbots in live chat can use the available medical data to automate the process, thus saving time for both patients and doctors. Moreover, **requesting insurance details from patients helps the healthcare provider automate the insurance billing** and claims processing.





# Why is in-app chat important in healthcare?

## | Benefits for patients

Simply put, **patients are asking for digital solutions in healthcare.**

Better said, they are expecting them.

It has to do with the generational change - the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers are used to traditional aspects of healthcare. However, Gen Xers, Millennials, and Gen Z expect more due to their proneness to digital solutions in everyday life.

To be specific, **patients want to have the possibility to schedule medical appointments, get test results, receive reminders, request prescription refills, and more via their phones.** Using a myriad of other apps in their daily lives, they are used to live chat support.

For an optimized patient experience, healthcare providers should offer the same kind of support via live chat to their consumers.

### ● Real-time interaction

Live chat is a combination of real-time interaction but without holding on like on the phone. Think about WhatsApp, Telegram, or Viber: you're communicating with a person in real-time, but you're doing other things while waiting for a reply, and you don't wait for a reply long.

44% of Millennials will choose a medical provider<sup>4</sup> because they use mobile digital solutions. In general, **younger generations prefer instant messaging and texting over phone calls.**

Implementing in-app chat solutions equals catering to younger patients who expect support during critical touchpoints with the healthcare provider.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ajmc.com/view/how-millennials-and-gen-zers-are-driving-the-digital-healthcare-revolution>



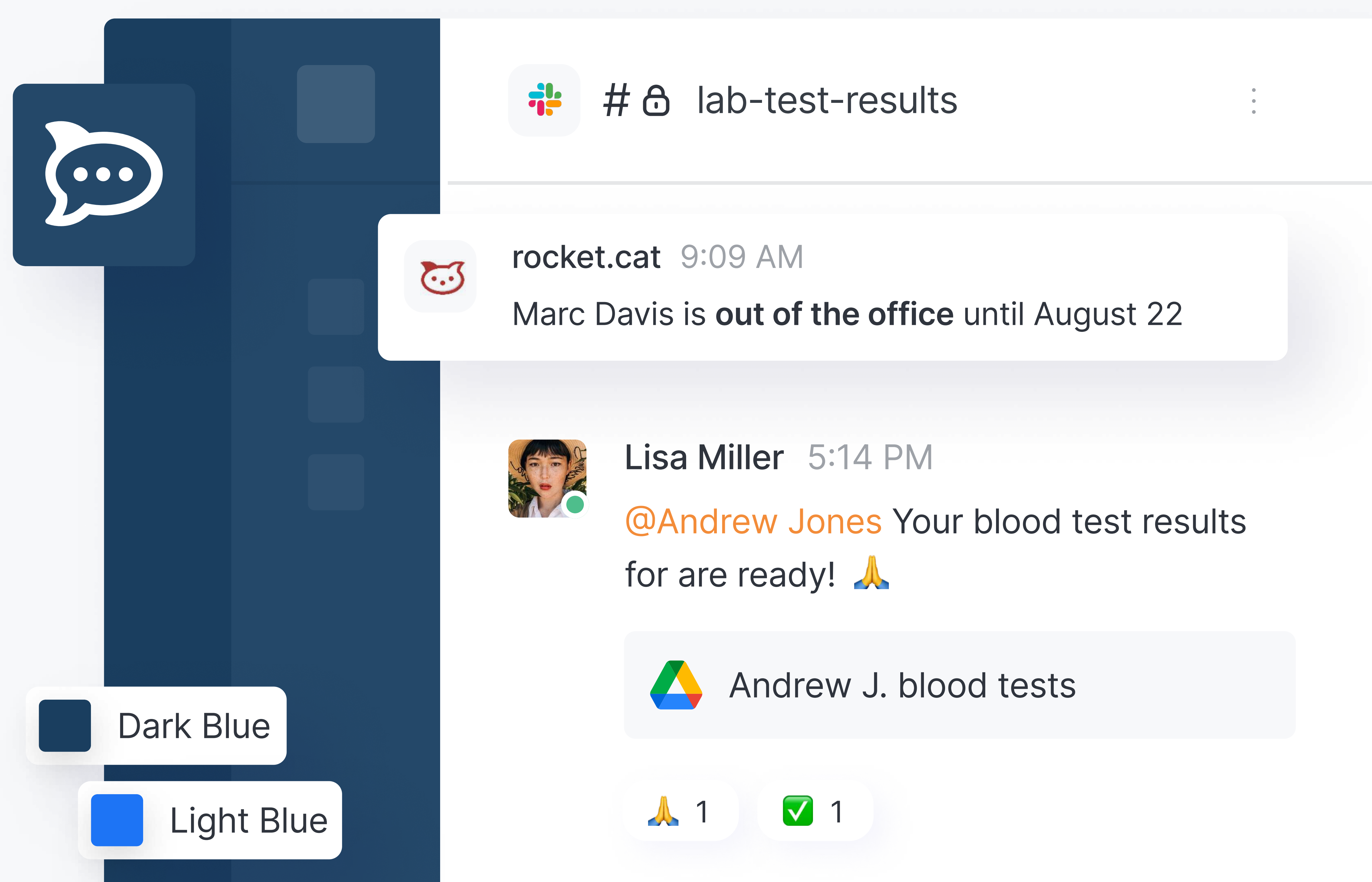
## ● Personalization

As discussed before, chatbots used on live chat can easily collect patient data. With full access to conversation and medical history, **live chat can be used to deliver personalized messages and even suggestions.**

For example, patients can get reminders to set annual medical exams or get suggestions on which tests to take according to their symptoms.

## ● Accessibility

In-app chat **enables patients to avoid business hours and waiting on the phone when trying to schedule appointments**, get the test results, or find additional information. In other words, it helps patients a more convenient way of communication with the healthcare provider.





## Benefits for healthcare providers

There are numerous benefits of implementing an in-app chat solution for healthcare providers. However, all these benefits cumulatively lead to optimized patient experience, which leads to happier existing patients and more new patients.

Overall, **digitalization in healthcare will cater to a younger generation of patients without deterring the old.** It will also allow healthcare providers to increase the effectiveness of their internal staff - both medical and patient support or receptionists.

Here is the drill-down:

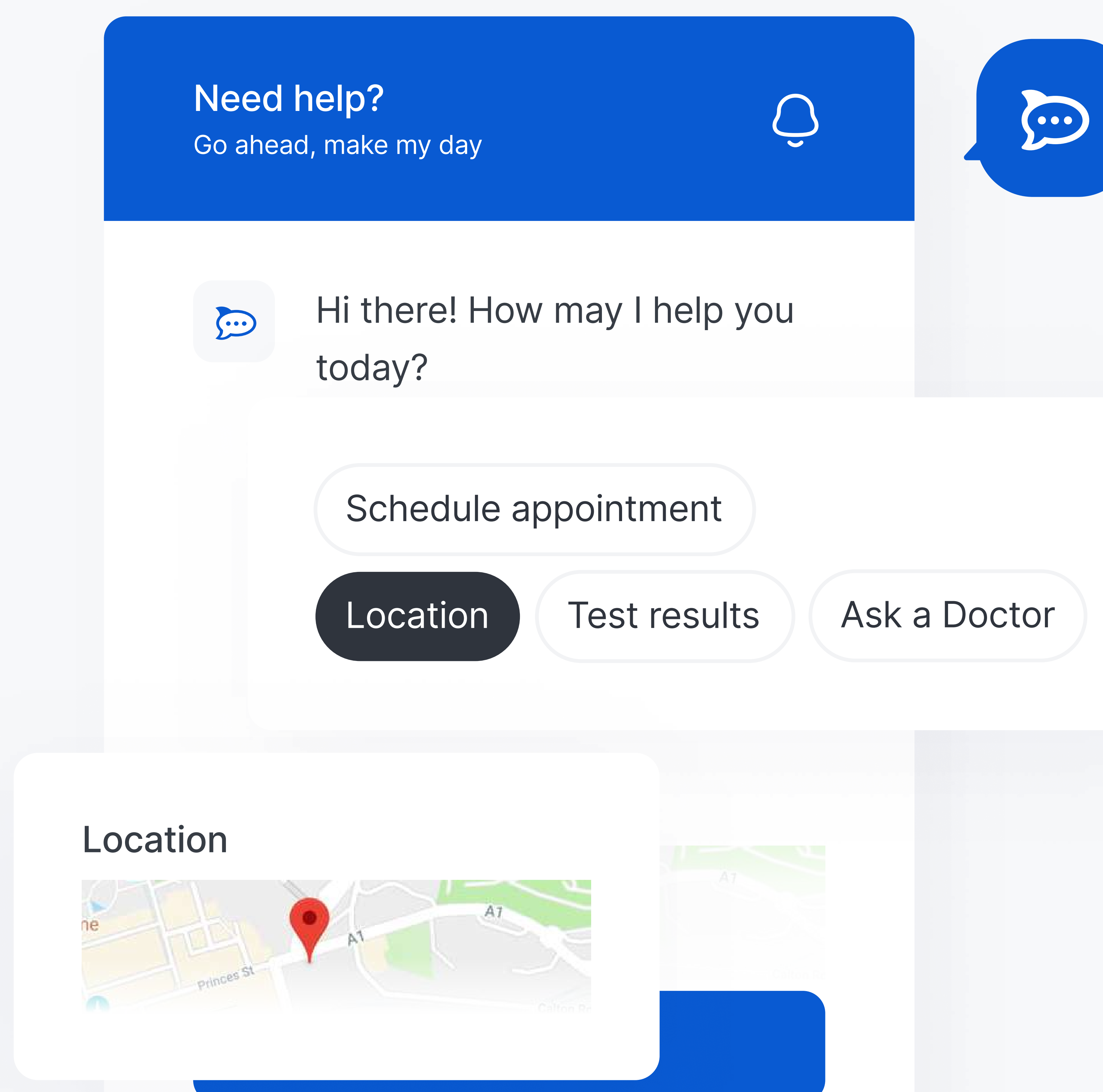
- Automation and reducing phone usage

**Automating patient inquiries reduces the need for human operators.**

With chatbots integrated into their live chat, healthcare organizations save 4 minutes per customer inquiry<sup>5</sup>.

This leaves your non-medical staff more time to spend on other tasks and reduces the need to hire more phone operators as your business grows.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.telusinternational.com/articles/rise-of-conversational-bots-in-healthcare>

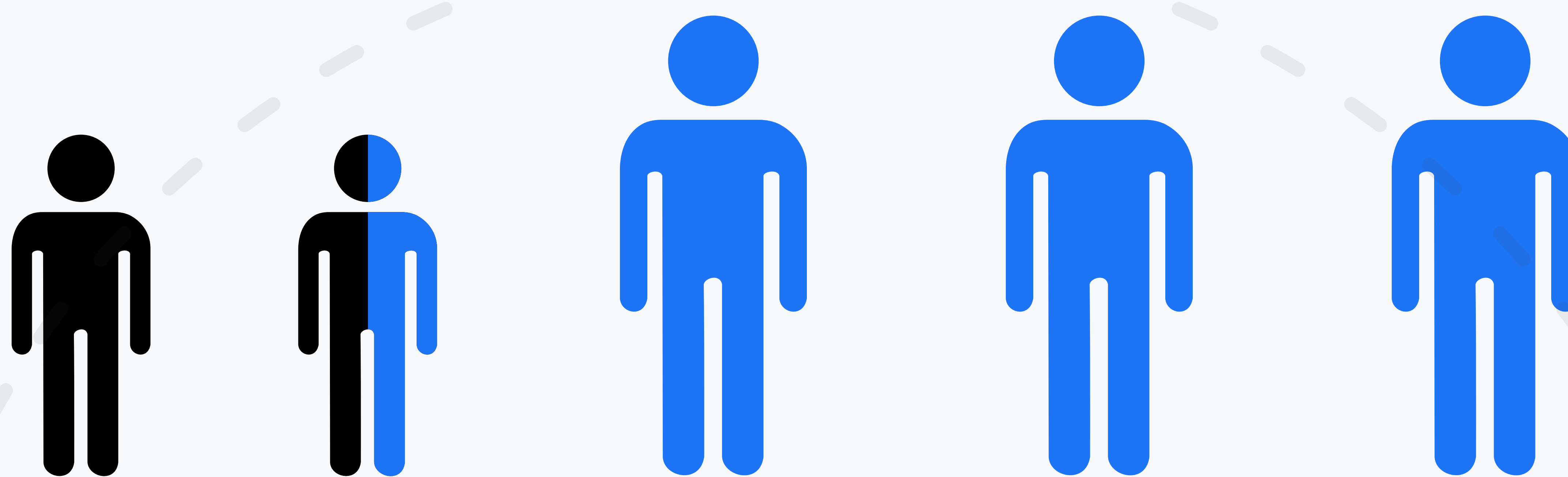




- **Attracting more patients**

As mentioned before, younger patients are more willing to choose medical providers who offer digital capabilities. For example, 70% of consumers will choose healthcare providers who will send them reminders for follow-up care. Moreover, 68% of consumers will choose providers that allow them to book, change, and cancel appointments online.

In-app chat is a vital part of digital healthcare since it allows for real-time conversation, thus **offering a familiar kind of customer support to patients.**



**70%**



**of consumers will choose healthcare providers who will send them reminders for follow-up care.**



## ● Interoperability

**In-app chats can interact with other systems used in healthcare** - such as self-scheduling or EMR (Electronic Medical Records). This allows for numerous possibilities.

For example, with access to full patient conversation history or medical records, live chat can propose medical exams or refer a patient to a certain medical expert.

Moreover, live chat can act as a customer support channel during self-scheduling medical appointments.

## ● Better time management

Healthcare organizations can achieve better time utilization with live chat that supports self-scheduling and automation.

For example, **patients spend on average 7 minutes on phone calls to cancel appointments<sup>6</sup>**. With live chat and self-scheduling, this process can be much faster.

Moreover, canceled appointments can be re-booked by offering other patients to book the empty slots.

This way, the no-show rate is reduced, doctors have their schedules full, and the non-billable hours are minimized.

## ● Cost savings

Together with other digital solutions in healthcare, in-app chat allows patients to access care more quickly and easily. Moreover, digital solutions reduce the pressure on healthcare professionals and systems as a whole by eliminating repetitive work, thus ensuring more efficient interactions.

All this leads to long-term cost savings for healthcare providers. **Chatbots are estimated to drive \$3.6 billion in cost savings<sup>7</sup> for health systems by 2022.**

<sup>6</sup> <https://newsroom.accenture.com/industries/health-public-service/two-in-three-patients-will-book-medical-appointments-online-in-five-years-accenture-predicts.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/press-releases/ai-powered-chatbots-drive-dramatic-cost-savings>



# The challenge: Digitalization while ensuring data privacy

Healthcare institutions and health tech providers are digitalizing their services since they want to improve their existing patients' experience and attract more patients.

However, **some serious risks related to patients' data privacy make it more complex to implement in-app chat and other digital solutions.**

Namely, healthcare providers and their partners that deal with Protected Health Information (PHI) are prone to data mishandling. Research by the Journal of the American Medical Association<sup>8</sup> found that out of all PHI breaches, 41.5% happened due to theft - which is nothing that medical entities could have prevented.

However, more alarming is that **53% of data breaches happened due to human errors or neglect of healthcare entities' internal staff.**

In total, 13.3% of PHI data breaches happened through internal staff mailing mistakes, including wrong recipients, unencrypted content, and cc-ing instead of bcc-ing. This implies how risky it is to communicate sensitive information via email.

Moreover, data breaches in healthcare are very costly<sup>9</sup>: in 2020, the total cost of data breaches in the healthcare industry was \$13.2bn, with a \$7.1m price per breach.

This speaks volumes about **the need to strengthen internal IT security and comply with regulatory requirements such as HIPAA** (Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).

Thus, HIPAA-compliant in-app chat solutions are the ones that ensure the highest security standards when it comes to exchanging confidential patient information. With solutions such as encryption, secure and accurate transmission, access controls, timed sign-out features, and audit controls, healthcare providers can rest assured that their in-app chat meets HIPAA criteria and ensures patients' data privacy.

<sup>8</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/article-abstract/2715158>

<sup>9</sup> <https://alltech.news/cyber-security-news/breaches-cost-us-healthcare-organizations-13bn-in-2020-25354>

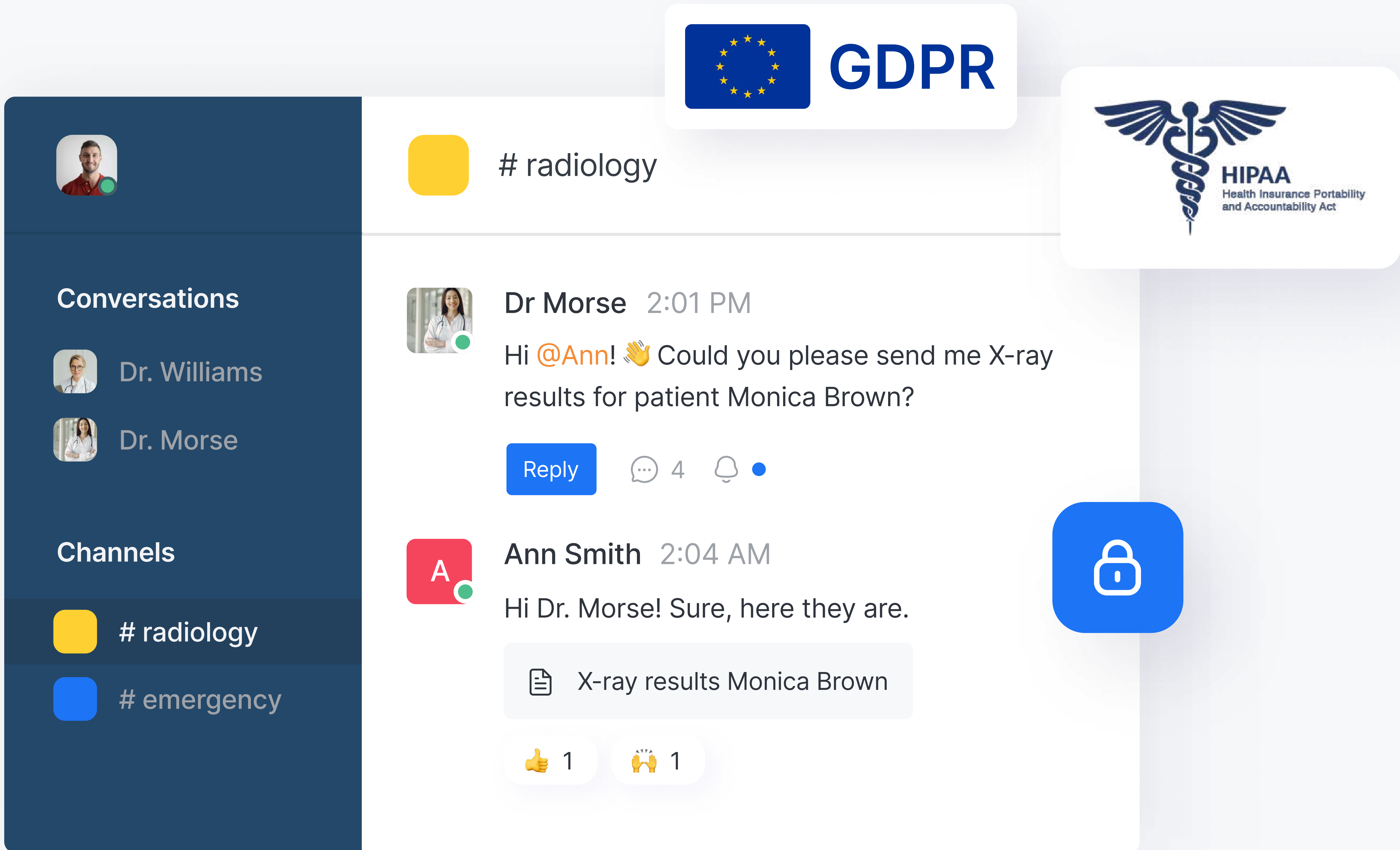


# Choosing the right patient communication platform

With the right technology at hand, you can provide an excellent patient experience while ensuring data privacy. However, there are many solutions to choose from: here are the criteria to help you pick the right software as your patient communication platform.

## HIPAA compliance

To avoid data breaches and unintentional data mishandling, it's crucial to look for a **HIPAA-ready solution**. This will encompass a variety of security features - including encryption, secure access controls, and the ability to audit communication by administrators.





## End-to-end encryption

End-to-end encryption is an industry-standard security feature that ensures that the only parties that can access the message content are the ones that hold the decryption keys – usually the sender and the receiver.

Most consumer and business-facing instant messaging apps include this feature, and it should be **a staple of healthcare-approved in-app chat solutions.**

## On-premise hosting

<sup>10</sup> [https://f.hubspotusercontent10.net/hubfs/8554162/The\\_State\\_of\\_On-Prem\\_Whitepaper.pdf](https://f.hubspotusercontent10.net/hubfs/8554162/The_State_of_On-Prem_Whitepaper.pdf)

A great way to prevent data theft is to ensure complete data sovereignty. This is possible through on-premise hosting. 65% of organizations purchase on-prem solutions<sup>10</sup> for security and data protection reasons.

**On-premise hosting allows organizations to fully own their data and avoid possible cyberattacks aimed at their solution provider.**

## Federation

With the federation feature, **communication through your in-app chat is enabled regardless of the communication solution used by your vendors, suppliers, and patients.** This is a great way to improve your patients' experience: they never have to leave the communication channel they prefer, while you have all your conversations in one place.



## Workflows and user management

In order to fully protect your sensitive patient data, you should look for features to control workflows and user management, such as **Active Directory, SAML authentication, or Single Sign-On.**

Among other things, this will minimize risks that originate from user misidentification or unauthorized access.

## ISO 27001 certification

After an expert assessment, **ISO 27001 certification is given to organizations that demonstrate the investment in people, technology, and processes.** A communication platform provider with this certification is a trusted partner for data protection and security.

## Full patient conversation history

It's important to have the ability to access the entire patient conversation history if you want to enable the best patient experience with in-app chat. **This will allow a chatbot to make better suggestions and personalize the conversation with your patients.**

Moreover, full patient conversation history enables providers to easily find and access crucial patient information no matter which communication channels your patient uses.

## EMR integration

Without the EMR integration, your in-app chat will be limited in performing a number of functions needed to fully utilize the power of digital communication with patients. **Solutions that provide EMR integration are usually open-sourced and highly flexible,** so look for those traits in your future in-app chat provider.



# Rocket.Chat: The easiest, more secure way to connect with your patients

Rocket.Chat is a HIPAA-ready messaging platform that connects you with patients, colleagues, and other companies. It offers self-managed deployment, ensuring that your patients' data never gets exposed.

Freely communicate with your patients without sacrificing their privacy. With Rocket.Chat, healthcare professionals can anonymize and protect any patient data exchanged.

Rocket.Chat's open-source technology allows for the highest level of customization according to your organization's preferences.

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