

From Voice to Value:
**Why Patient
Engagement Is Now
a Strategic Capability**



In today's rapidly evolving health ecosystem, the rules of medicines development have fundamentally shifted. Patients are no longer positioned at the end of the value chain as recipients of care, they are shaping it from the outset. Enabled by data, technology and regulatory momentum, patients are increasingly influential in medicines development, access decisions, and health policy.

This shift has profound implications for industry and advocacy leaders. Patient engagement (PE) is no longer a reputational or compliance exercise—it is a strategic capability that directly affects risk, return on investment, and long-term sustainability. As the PFMD (Patient Focused Medicines Development) succinctly puts it: ***“PE is market intelligence that translates into fewer surprises, better ROI, and smoother commercial cycles.”***

The question facing the industry is no longer whether to engage patients, but how to do so consistently, credibly, and in ways that impact.

The New Reality: Regulatory Momentum vs Operational Friction

A defining trend of 2026 is the deepening integration of patient perspectives into EU policy and regulatory processes. The EMA's recently released draft reflection paper (closed for consultation at the end of January 2026) for example, explicitly states *“an optimal patient-relevant medicine development programme incorporates patients' perspectives and documents their experience.”* This includes Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs), patient preference studies and structured patient engagement activities. With this, regulators, HTA bodies, payers, and policymakers increasingly acknowledge that patient experience data are essential to determining the real-world value of medicines throughout their lifecycle.

So, the intent is clear. Guidance exists. And yet, a persistent gap remains.

Expectations remain fragmented; standards uneven, with patient insights often arriving too late; and guidance difficult to operationalize in real decision settings. In short, patient input is welcomed – actively encouraged even – but teams remain uncertain how to translate it into regulatory-ready, access-relevant evidence. Too often, PE programmes capture generic quality-of-life data that satisfy regulatory checkboxes but fail to capture the insight that justifies real value, differentiation, or price in the real world.

Learning to Speak “Access” Without Losing the “Human”

One of the most critical shifts required is learning to translate patient insights into policy-ready evidence – data that can withstand scrutiny while retaining authenticity. Patient stories are powerful, but stories alone rarely shift access decisions. This is where many organizations struggle.

What matters is translation: converting lived experience into evidence that aligns with regulatory, payer, and policy logic. **Influence comes from connecting human relevance to system-level consequence.** This shift is central to how patient engagement moves from “voice” to “value.”

The Strategic Opportunity: Turning Voice into Value

As momentum grows, industry must partner with patients as a strategic priority. By centring patients not just in conversation but in strategy, we move closer to a healthcare system where data empowers rather than excludes, and where engagement delivers value at every level of decision-making.

The value lies not necessarily in the number of insights but rather in designing engagement activities that are decision-ready: **credible to regulators, meaningful to payers, useful to clinicians, and authentic to patients.**

In 2026, those who will lead will be those who:

- Use patient engagement consistently, not episodically
- Translate experience into evidence without losing meaning
- Treat advocacy as an early indicator of access risk, not an afterthought

Havas SO was built for this moment.

We go beyond surface-level data and generic interactions. We immerse ourselves in the lived experiences of patients—listening intently, co-creating with patient communities, and uncovering the unfiltered insights that only come from deep, respectful dialogue.

These insights become the foundation for everything we do.

And from there, **we bring bold, innovative thinking to life.**

We design solutions that surprise, resonate, and inspire action—whether through immersive storytelling, interactive digital platforms, emotionally intelligent content, or unexpected partnerships that reframe how patients access their care.

The result?

// Engagement that feels human.

// Trust that sticks.

// Impact that matters.

In a world where patient voices are louder than ever, we help our partners turn those voices into meaningful impact—because when patients are truly heard, better decisions follow.

**We don't just keep up with change.
We help shape what comes next.**

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