What to decide before building a patient app

A checklist for patient advocacy groups, rare-disease foundations, specialty clinics and research teams.

Answer these before the build starts. They're the questions every patient app project has to settle.

1 Who it's for and the one job it does

- [ ] Who is the main user: patients, caregivers, or both?
- [ ] What is the one job the app does on a normal day? (Example: "log how I feel in under a minute.")
- [ ] One condition, a group of related conditions, or any condition?
- [ ] What will the app deliberately leave out in version 1?

Why it matters: one clear daily job keeps people using the app after week one.

2 What patients track

- [ ] Which symptoms, side effects or events matter most to your community?
- [ ] Which scale for each (0 to 10, yes/no, free text)?
- [ ] Visits and appointments: scans, bloodwork, follow-ups, notes?
- [ ] What does a patient bring to their next visit? (Example: a two-week summary plus questions to ask.)

Why it matters: fields your community already uses in conversation get logged. Fields they don't recognize get skipped.

3 Who sees the data

- [ ] Patient only, or can they share with a caregiver or care team?
- [ ] Sharing by the patient's choice only (export or share a summary), or automatic?
- [ ] Will your organization see anything? If so, only de-identified totals, or more?
- [ ] Who inside your organization can access it, and how is that decided?

Why it matters: this one decision shapes the privacy terms, the design and the trust your community places in the app.

4 Privacy, consent and positioning

- [ ] Who owns the data? (We recommend: the patient.)
- [ ] Can patients export everything and delete their account at any time?
- [ ] Plain-language data-handling page: what's stored, where, and who can see it.
- [ ] Which privacy laws apply to you (for example HIPAA or state health-data laws)? Ask your counsel before launch.
- [ ] Clear statement that the app is not a medical device and does not diagnose or treat.

Why it matters: patients join when they understand exactly what happens to their entries.

Not a medical device. GKTech Solutions builds software and does not provide medical or legal advice.

5 Platforms and access

- [ ] iPhone, Android, web, or a mix? What does your community mostly use?
- [ ] Does it need to work offline or on slow connections?
- [ ] Languages, text size, contrast, screen-reader support.
- [ ] Sign-in: email link, password, or no account until sharing is needed?

Why it matters: an app that's hard to open on a bad day won't get used on a bad day.

6 Wording and review

- [ ] Who writes and approves the symptom names and help text?
- [ ] Will clinicians or an advisory group review the wording before launch?
- [ ] How often will wording be updated, and who decides?

Why it matters: your community's words, reviewed by people they trust, make the app feel like theirs.

7 Launch and community

- [ ] Pilot group: how many people, and how will you invite them?
- [ ] Where do users go for help: email, a form, a community channel?
- [ ] How will you collect feedback in the first 30 days?
- [ ] Who on your team owns the app after launch?

Why it matters: a small pilot finds the confusing screens before the whole community does.

8 Ownership and running costs

- [ ] Whose name and brand are on the app and in the app stores?
- [ ] Who owns the code, the app store accounts and the data?
- [ ] Who pays for hosting, updates and support after launch, and for how long?
- [ ] What happens to patient data if the program ends?

Why it matters: settling this up front protects your community and your organization.

9 How you'll know it's working

- [ ] Share of pilot users still logging in week 4
- [ ] Logs per active user per week
- [ ] Visit summaries exported or shared
- [ ] What patients and clinicians say about visits that used a summary

Why it matters: a few honest measures tell you whether to expand, change or stop.

Next step

Bring your answers, even partial ones, to a free scoping session. We'll send back a written one-page scope: what to build first, what to leave out, and what it would take.

Scope an app for your community:
`gktechsolutions.com/healthcare`