



Orthodontic Software and Patient-Centric Mobile Applications

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of digital innovations in orthodontic care has changed treatment delivery, with smartphone apps becoming important additions to conventional methods. Due to orthodontics extended duration and reliance on patient cooperation, these tools improve engagement, education, and compliance beyond in clinic visits. This review analyse orthodontic apps and software, examining their classification (educational platforms, decision support tools, compliance aids, progress trackers, etc.), effectiveness, and limitations. Evidence indicates apps improve patient awareness and protocol compliance but face challenges in content accuracy, clinical validation, personalization, data privacy, and regulation. Long term research and evidence-based improvements are essential for incorporating these technologies effectively.

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INTRODUCTION

The arrival of digital technology has completely changed how healthcare is provided and experienced, changing the way the clinician and patient communicate and increasing the availability to health-related information [1, 2]. In this setting, smartphones have developed from personal communication tools into various platforms that can help with patient education, patient management, and medical care. The use of digital tools is especially important in orthodontics, a specialty where long term patient cooperation is important for successful results [3-5].

One of the most obvious signs of this digital transformation are mobile health applications. These tools which are meant to fill the gaps between clinic visits, these tools can deliver appointment scheduling, hygiene instruction, compliance tracking, and emergency guidance directly to patients' devices. Their ability to maintain involvement outside the traditional clinical environment makes them appropriate to orthodontic care, where consistent behaviour over months or years directly impacts treatment results.^{6,7} The orthodontic app market has grown significantly over the past 10 years. Where earlier literature recorded a limited and underdeveloped selection of essential software, recent surveys show that the range of available tools is much broader, including diagnostic support tools, treatment planning platforms, patient education resources, and apps designed to improve patient compliance for both clinicians and patients^{8,9,10}. Although the number of these tools has increased, their quality has not improved at the same rate. A large number of these applications lack solid scientific support, and questions about their clinical accuracy and evidence-based design are still common [11, 12].

From a behavioural point of view, patient-focused applications offer an organized way for strengthening the motivational, cognitive, and environmental factors known to influence compliance [6, 7]. Using digital reminders easy to understand learning materials and tools that track progress can make it easier for patients to stick to their treatment plans. These features support positive changes in health behaviour and help patients feel more confident and motivated to follow [13, 14, 1].

The rise of digital platforms has made these trends even stronger. Many orthodontic patients now look to social media and online sites for treatment advice. This shows they're open to using technology, but it also means they could run into false or misleading information. That's why it's so important for trusted, clinician-approved online resources to be available, so patients have reliable guidance they can count on [9, 10].

Orthodontic apps and software show a lot of promise, but reviews of them often point out problems. Many contain errors, give incomplete advice, or vary so much in features that it's hard for clinicians to use them with confidence in everyday practice. Because of this, it's important to take a closer, critical look at what's currently available. This review aims to explore how useful these tools really are they help with patient education, encourage treatment compliance, and meet the needs of modern orthodontic care [1, 2].

CLASSIFICATION

The rise of digital orthodontics has led researchers and clinicians to create ways of organizing the many apps and software tools now available. Older systems mainly separated tools into two groups, those for clinicians and those for patients. But newer approaches show a bigger shift: digital platforms are becoming more connected, supporting patients through every stage of their orthodontic journey, from first noticing a problem to long-term follow-up after treatment.

Informational and Educational Apps

At the start of orthodontic care, some apps focus mainly on teaching patients. They share easy-to-understand information about common bite problems, treatment options, and different appliances, often using visuals to make things clearer. These tools help patients come to their appointments feeling more informed and less nervous. Platforms like Learn About Braces are good examples, as they give patients a solid base for open and meaningful conversations with their orthodontist [15].

Clinical Tools for Decision-Making and Treatment Planning

Beyond general education, some apps help people figure out if they might be good candidates for certain treatments. For example, tools like Alignermeter let patients check if clear aligner therapy could be right for them before seeing a clinician. The growth of these tools shows a bigger trend, patients are becoming more aware and taking a more active role in their own healthcare [16].

Appliance Care and Usage Guidance Apps

Once treatment starts, patients need clear and reliable guidance on how to take care of their braces or other appliances between visits. Apps in this category like iBrace Help, bring the orthodontist's advice into everyday life. They cover things like cleaning routines, when and how long to wear appliances, and tips for solving common problems. In many ways, they act like a small version of the instruction's patients would get in the clinic [3].

Patient Cooperation Tools

One of the biggest challenges in orthodontics is helping patients stay consistent with their treatment habits. A special group of apps focuses on this problem directly. Using reminders, progress trackers, and motivational tools, apps like Brace Accelerator, Rubber-Band Reminder, and SmileMission encourage patients to keep up with elastic wear, aligner changes, and appointments. These apps use ideas from behavioral science to keep patients involved and motivated throughout what can often be a long treatment journey [17].

Progress Tracking Resources

Keeping patients motivated during months or even years of orthodontic treatment takes more than just reminders, it requires showing real progress. Apps that track and display treatment milestones help by giving patients clear proof of how far they've come. Tools like Align On Time can also strengthen the bond between patient and clinician by creating a shared record of treatment progress [6].

After-Hours Emergency Guidance

Orthodontic problems don't always happen during office hours, and some apps are designed to help patients handle them calmly. By giving step-by-step guidance for common issues like a loose bracket or sudden discomfort, apps such as Orthodose and Straighten Me help patients manage problems on their own. This reduces unnecessary emergency visits and builds confidence in self-care [9].

CLINICIAN-SIDE DIGITAL TOOLS

Completing the digital orthodontics picture are software tools made mainly for clinicians. These include diagnostic apps, cephalometric analysis programs, treatment planning systems, and practice management software. While they aren't the main focus of patient focused reviews, they are essential for making orthodontic practice more efficient and clearer.

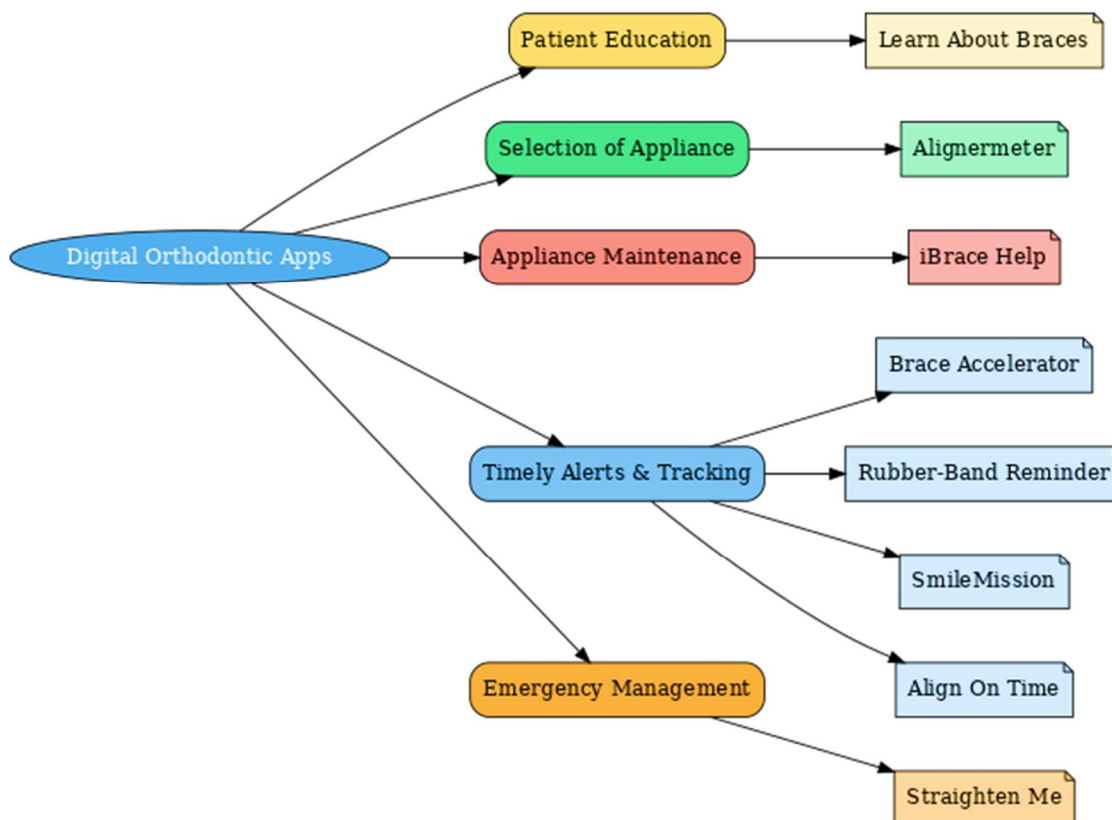


Figure No. 1 Flowchart Showing Different Kinds of Apps

Functions and Clinical Utility of Orthodontic Software and Patient-Centric Mobile Applications

Orthodontic apps and software made for patients serve many purposes. Together, they aim to improve the treatment experience, keep patients engaged, and make clinical work smoother. Research shows that these digital tools extend orthodontic care beyond the clinic by offering ongoing education, support, and motivation throughout the entire treatment process [18].

Patient Education and Information Delivery

A key goal of orthodontic apps is to make treatment information easy to access and understand. Educational platforms help patients learn about their bite problems, the appliances being used, what procedures involve, and what results they can realistically expect. This reduces uncertainty and builds confidence. Presenting information with visuals and interactive features is often more effective than words alone. In this way, these tools encourage patients to be more aware, make informed choices, and take an active role in their care [19].

Behavioural Support and Compliance Enhancement

Patient cooperation is key to successful orthodontic treatment especially when it comes to wearing elastics regularly, using aligners correctly, keeping up with oral hygiene, and showing up for appointments. Reminder apps help by sending timely notifications and tracking habits, making it easier for patients to stay on track. Studies show that digital prompts and feedback can boost motivation and encourage patients to stick with their treatment. Models like **COM-B** also support the idea that mobile apps can improve skills, create opportunities, and build motivation all of which lead to better compliance [20].

Appointment Management and Treatment Monitoring

Many apps help patients stay on track with their treatment by sending reminders for appointments, appliance changes, and daily hygiene tasks. Progress-tracking features let patients see how their treatment is moving forward, which keeps them motivated and committed during what can often be a long process. For clinicians, these tools also make communication easier between visits and help cut down on missed appointments, supporting smoother and more consistent treatment progress.

Appliance Care and Self-Management

Apps that teach patients how to care for their appliances act like an extension of the orthodontist's instructions. They give practical tips on cleaning, maintenance, and everyday use. Because patients can revisit these instructions anytime, confusion is reduced and confidence grows. This is especially helpful for younger patients, who often benefit from repeated reminders and guidance [21].

Emergency Guidance

Some apps include emergency support features that guide patients through handling common orthodontic problems at home like a loose bracket, a wire poking out, or general discomfort. These tools help patients manage small issues safely without needing an unexpected clinic visit. They build confidence in self-care and keep treatment moving smoothly, especially when professional help isn't immediately available [22].

Patient Motivation Tools

Digital platforms also support patient wellbeing by helping them feel more involved in their treatment. Being able to track progress, get timely feedback, and access useful information anytime can ease anxiety and improve satisfaction. When patients are more engaged, they tend to follow instructions better and have a more positive experience throughout their treatment [23].

BENEFITS

1. One of the biggest strengths of orthodontic apps is patient education. Instead of relying only on what the orthodontist explains during visits, patients can go back to care instructions and treatment details whenever they want. This helps them understand better and encourages them to take a more active role in their own care.
2. Another big benefit of orthodontic apps is helping patients stay consistent with treatment. Many patients especially teenagers find it hard to keep up with elastic wear, aligner changes, and daily hygiene routines. Timely push notifications and progress-tracking features act like gentle reminders, encouraging good habits and keeping patients on track throughout their treatment.
3. Motivation is also supported through visual feedback and progress tracking. When patients can actually see their treatment moving forward over time, it helps fight the exhaustion that often comes with long orthodontic cases. It also strengthens the overall connection between patient and clinician by making progress feel more real and shared.
4. Convenience is another big advantage of orthodontic apps. Having access to guidance anytime, even outside the clinic, means patients don't have to rely only on in-person visits for minor concerns. This helps keep care continuous between appointments and makes treatment feel smoother and more connected.
5. Some apps go even further by offering emergency guidance. They give patients clear, step-by-step instructions for common problems like a loose bracket, a wire sticking out, or general discomfort. This helps patients handle small issues on their own, prevents unnecessary urgent visits, and ensures things are managed safely until they can see their orthodontist.
6. Finally, apps that combine reminders with feedback help patients build lasting habits. By supporting regular appliance wear and good oral hygiene, these tools encourage meaningful behaviour change. This approach fits well with modern, patient focused orthodontic care, where the focus is on supporting patients to stay consistent and involved throughout treatment.

LIMITATIONS

- The information in health apps isn't always reliable. Some apps share details that are old, incomplete, or not backed up by solid evidence. This can confuse or mislead patients, especially if they use the apps without proper guidance from a doctor or professional.
- Another problem is that there aren't clear rules or checks for these apps. They often get released so quickly that proper medical testing can't keep up. As a result, both patients and doctors are left unsure about whether the apps are truly safe or effective.
- Another big issue is personalization. Orthodontic care is unique to each patient, but most apps give general advice that doesn't match the specific instructions an orthodontist provides. This means patients may not get the guidance that truly fits their treatment plan.
- Even the best apps only work if people keep using them. But constant notifications, losing interest over time, and irregular use are real challenges that can reduce how helpful they are in the long run.
- Access is another challenge. Not every patient has the right device or the skills to use these apps easily. Things like age, income, and background can also affect whether people are able to use them well.
- Finally, as these apps collect more personal and medical information, concerns about privacy, data safety, and how patient details are handled become very important. Both the app developers and the doctors who recommend them have a serious responsibility to protect this information.

EMERGING TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN ORTHODONTIC TECHNOLOGY AND PATIENT-FOCUSED MOBILE TOOLS

As digital tools keep getting smarter, orthodontic software and mobile apps are set to play a much bigger role in how braces and aligners are managed. Right now, most apps just remind patients about appointments, share basic information, or let them track progress. But the future looks far more exciting: apps that can give personalized guidance, use real-time data, and create a richer, more connected experience for both doctors and patients. Instead of being just a side tool, these apps could become an everyday partner in the treatment journey making care easier, more engaging, and more effective [24, 25].

AI and Predictive Capabilities

One of the biggest changes coming in orthodontics is the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Instead of just keeping patient records, future AI systems will be able to study that information and spot problems early before they turn into bigger issues. They could also predict whether a patient is following their treatment plan and give doctors helpful tips to adjust care right away. In short, AI won't just store data, it will actively help both patients and clinicians make treatment smoother, smarter, and more effective.

Growth of Orthodontic Care

With the rise of telehealth, orthodontics is also moving into the digital space. Future apps may let patients send photos or digital scans straight to their orthodontist for a quick check-up, without needing to visit the clinic every time. This means fewer unnecessary trips, better access for people living far from cities, and the same level of professional care just delivered easily. In other words, patients can stay connected to their orthodontist and keep treatment on track, even from home.

Personalized treatment approach

Instead of giving the same advice to everyone, future orthodontic apps will adjust to each patient's personal treatment plan and habits. Imagine getting reminders that fit your schedule, progress dashboards that show exactly where you are in your journey, and learning materials that match your stage of treatment. All of this is designed to keep patients motivated, informed, and moving forward with confidence.

Motivation and Behavioral Design

App makers are starting to use ideas from psychology to make treatments easier to stick with. Instead of feeling like a boring routine, apps can turn the process into something more engaging. Things like game-style rewards, progress milestones, and instant feedback can make a big difference. For younger patients especially, this approach helps keep them motivated and makes long-term treatment feel less like a burden and more like an experience they actually want to continue.

Connected Care Approach

As orthodontic clinics move toward digital tools, patient apps will need to connect easily with the systems doctors already use like 3D imaging, digital treatment plans, and health records. When these platforms work together smoothly, it saves time, cuts down on paperwork, and makes the whole process clearer. This helps maintain effective coordination between doctors and patients, with less difficulty and more focus on treatment.

The Need for Evidence and Guidance

Big tech ideas in orthodontics need to be backed up by solid clinical standards. To make sure apps are safe and truly helpful, the field will need clear rules for testing how well they work. Developers, researchers, and orthodontists will also need to work closely together. Without proper checks, new tools could end up causing more problems than they solve.

Privacy and Data Ethics

As orthodontics relies more on digital tools, protecting patient data becomes even more important. Future apps and platforms will need to do more than just meet the basic rules. They should have clear and honest policies about how data is used, strong security like encryption to keep information safe, and open communication with patients so they feel confident their privacy is protected.

Looking Ahead

The orthodontic apps of the future won't just send reminders to wear aligners. They'll act like smart partners in care helping doctors keep an eye on progress from a distance, giving patients treatment plans that fit their needs, and making the whole process more involving. But to make this vision real, there has to be steady investment in research, clear rules to guide development, and above all, a focus on patient wellbeing in every design choice.

CONCLUSION

Digital tools have really changed orthodontic care. At first, they were just simple apps for booking appointments or sending reminders. Now, they've grown into full systems that support patients at every

step. These platforms can explain treatments, encourage good habits, track progress, and keep communication open even when patients aren't in the clinic.

- This means orthodontists can guide patients not only during visits, but also in their daily lives. Early studies show that these tools help patients stay more engaged, follow their treatment plans more closely, and take an active role in their own care.
- Research today suggests that mobile apps can be valuable additions to traditional orthodontic treatment. They give patients easy access to useful information, help them stick to routines, and provide support for everyday concerns. Features like reminders, motivation tools, and progress tracking make it easier for patients to stay committed to their treatment goals. This reflects a bigger shift toward “digital orthodontics,” where technology connects Expert knowledge with patient self-care.
- Of course, there are challenges. Not all apps have reliable content, many lack strong clinical testing, and there are no clear standards to regulate them. Personalization is often limited, some patients struggle with digital tools, and protecting sensitive health data is a major concern. Because of this, orthodontists play an important role in guiding patients toward safe, trustworthy apps while keeping expert supervision in place.
- Looking ahead, advances in artificial intelligence, remote monitoring, and personalized platforms will likely push this transformation even further. But lasting benefits will depend not only on how advanced the technology becomes, but also on strong research, teamwork across different fields, and a commitment to ethical development.
- In the end, orthodontic software and patient-focused apps are becoming an important part of modern care. When they're backed by solid evidence and used responsibly, they can improve the patient experience, strengthen treatment results, and help orthodontics evolve in the digital age.

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