The Communication Challenge in Care Management: Connecting the Dots in Real time

Inability to react quickly to urgent member needs may result in member dissatisfaction, unnecessary hospitalizations and higher per member per year cost.

Healthcare is going through an evolution with members increasingly receiving care within the home. Whether it be a member transitioning from the inpatient setting or as an alternative site of care, members are requiring greater support at home from care managers, paid caregivers and family caregivers.

Historically, health plans worked predominantly with electronic visit verification (EVV) vendors to address administrative and payment issues for managing home bound populations. As the acuity of these members have increased it has become necessary to address the clinical issues as well. Many of the technologies that exist including phone, email, and fax, cannot meet the needs of Managed Medicaid and Medicare Advantage plans, negatively impacting the clinical, financial, and humanistic goals that these plans are striving for.

The June 2020 Porter Research study of Managed Medicaid and Medicare Advantage care managers found that only 12% of those surveyed were very satisfied with the ability of their current technology to enable effective collaboration with agency clinical staff, in-home care providers and family caregivers.

Only 12%

of care managers surveyed were **VERY SATISFIED** with their system's ability to enable effective communication between care managers & in-home caregivers

This report highlights the challenges care managers face using outdated communications methods which increase the risk of unnecessary emergency care, hospitalization or admission to a skilled nursing facility (SNF) and the associated increase in per member per year (PMPY) cost. In addition, the research demonstrates the benefits that could be achieved by enabling real-time collaboration between health plans, members, agency clinical staff, personal care aides and family members that are providing home care.

The report also provides examples of how one of the nation's largest health plans has addressed these challenges by implementing the Care Heroes mobile and web-based platform, which enables direct, instant communication and collaboration between all stakeholders.

Increasing Caseloads Overwhelming Care Managers

The increase in individuals receiving clinical and non-clinical care in the home over the last several years has resulted in elevated member- to-care manager ratios. Survey respondents averaged 125 members to each care manager, with 76% indicating that the ratio has increased in the last few years. Looking forward, 84% of respondents believe the number of members receiving in home care will increase in the future which could lead to even higher member-to-care manager ratios.

CHANGE IN MEMBER TO CARE MANAGER RATIO

NO CHANGE

| 76% | 16% | 8% |

INCREASE

DECREASE

This extraordinary case load means that care managers have limited time to monitor the care that actually takes place in each member's home. Respondents indicate that too often the information related to critical events, such as a series of falls or an ER visit, is received "after the fact" because there is no solution in place for timely communication between care manager and the paid and unpaid caregivers. Thus, care managers cannot provide the necessary response required to service the member proactively.

These factors create high levels of stress on care managers as they are held back from fulfilling their calling. And since, according to a Gallup 2020 survey, two of the main root causes for employee burnout are unmanageable workload and time pressure, these overwhelmed care managers are at greater risk for burnout. As burnout leads to turnover continuity of care for members suffers and overhead costs related to hiring and training new care managers are incurred.

## Better Technology Increases Employee Satisfaction and May Reduce Burnout

Conversely, health plans that employ technology and processes that enable care managers to better engage members and their paid and unpaid caregivers can provide higher job satisfaction and reduce burnout. Family members are critical to providing information regarding what is happening with a member. On average, a family caregiver is performing 76% of the ADL and IADL support at home with the remaining care delivered by the personal care attendant.

Each care manager interviewed describes the daily positive impact Care Heroes has on their job because the platform provides real-time visibility into each member's daily status and insight into the care that is being delivered. With Care Heroes they can more proactively serve members. To a person, every care manager interviewed declared that they "wished all of their home care agencies would use Care Heroes" because it gives them the peace of mind that their members are getting the care they need quickly and efficiently.

Outdated Communication Technology Delays Necessary Care

In an age where "there's an app for everything" care managers at major health plans are still predominately using outdated methods to communicate with in-home care providers and their members. Survey respondents claim that 75-80% of all communication with in-home care providers is still done via phone, email, and fax.

MOST COMMON COMMUNICATION METHODS USED WITH IN-HOME CAREGIVERS (PAID AND UNPAID)

Do Not Regularly Communicate — 9%

Portal — 7%

Video Chat — 2%

Text — 3%

Fax — 12%

Email — 14%

Phone — 53%
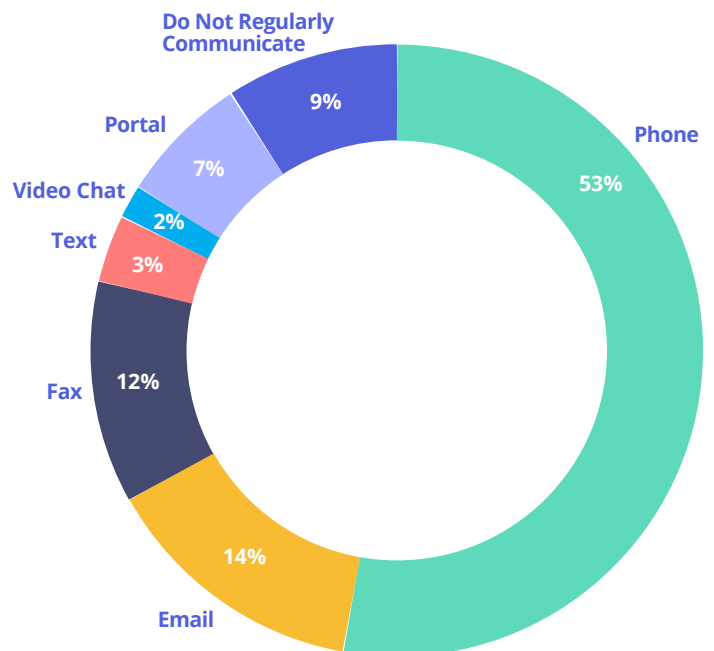
These communication methods often fail to immediately address urgent issues. Take phone for example: if a nurse can reach a care manager immediately regarding a member's difficulty taking a medication, resources can be deployed to solve the problem quickly. However, the standard communication process at health plans is much more complex. A care manager at a multi-billion dollar managed Medicaid plan described the typical process, "normally, a provider must call Member Services, leave a message, then a care management coordinator would need to track down the appropriate care manager to call the provider back. For a health plan, responding to a provider need or member issue could literally take a week."

This has been corroborated by in-home care providers who cite frustrations with the multiple steps required to reach the appropriate care manager. The problem is compounded when family caregivers, who can be the daily eyes and ears of the care manager in the home, do not have an ability to communicate problems directly to the care manager in real-time.

When dealing with life-threatening situations or adverse events that require immediate attention, a week's delay is not acceptable and can result in unnecessary hospitalizations, ER visits or SNF admissions.

Reducing Response Time Avoids Unnecessary Hospitalizations

Care managers that utilize Care Heroes point to the bi-directional communication that enables them to immediately be alerted to, and respond to, urgent issues. As one care manager at a multi-billion-dollar managed Medicaid plan put it, "with Care Heroes member problems can be solved in a couple hours versus days because providers have direct access to me through the solution. They don't have to go through Member Services to reach me." In one example, she referred to a note

one family caregiver placed in the Care Heroes platform regarding a member's fall. In just seconds this care manager was alerted and was able to quickly discover that the member did not have grab bars in her bathroom. Grab bars were immediately ordered and provided to help avoid future falls.

> *"With Care Heroes member problems can be solved in a couple hours versus days."*
>
> **– CARE MANAGER, MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR MANAGED MEDICAID PLAN**

This immediacy provided by Care Heroes is highly valued by paid caregivers as well. The Director of Nursing at a major provider explained how her team's relationship with the managed Medicaid plan changed, "rather than playing phone tag with someone, the Care Heroes system allows my team to quickly send a message to a care manager which then shows up on their computer or phone, allowing them to immediately respond to our patients' needs."

Agencies interviewed cited numerous situations where an unnecessary hospitalization was avoided due to the Care Heroes platform, whether it was immediately securing equipment and physical therapy for a patient experiencing falls, or quickly approving oxygen for a patient in need. One nurse described the process: "so I sent a message to the care manager telling her I needed to hear from her quickly and the patient needed X, Y, and Z. We timed it, and she responded in 15 MINUTES! Not only did she get the patient the supplies she needed, she got them within the hour."

Care Heroes also applies artificial intelligence and natural language processing to clinical data reported into an agency's electronic health record to alert care managers when an immediate outreach is necessary. And, because

the platform's predictive analytics creates a non-verbal, emotional sentiment rating based on each caregiver's care log, care managers can quickly and proactively triage members with the most urgent needs before they receive a direct alert from a caregiver.

Invest in Technology that Increases Member Satisfaction and Decreases Cost

Respondents in the study recognized an urgent need for health plans to invest in technology solutions that provide greater insights into the care that is occurring in the home, in real-time, with more transparency and instant communication to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations. When asked about their intent to invest in these technologies in the near future, respondents were 3.5X more likely to respond in the affirmative.

The top five business benefits centered around member satisfaction, quality of care through better coordination and measurement, and lower PMPY cost as a result of reducing unnecessary hospitalizations, ER visits and SNF admissions.

TOP 5 HIGHEST VALUED BUSINESS BENEFITS OF INVESTING IN REAL-TIME COLLABORATION SOLUTIONS

Better support members

Improve member satisfaction and retention

Reduce per member per year costs

Better care coordination

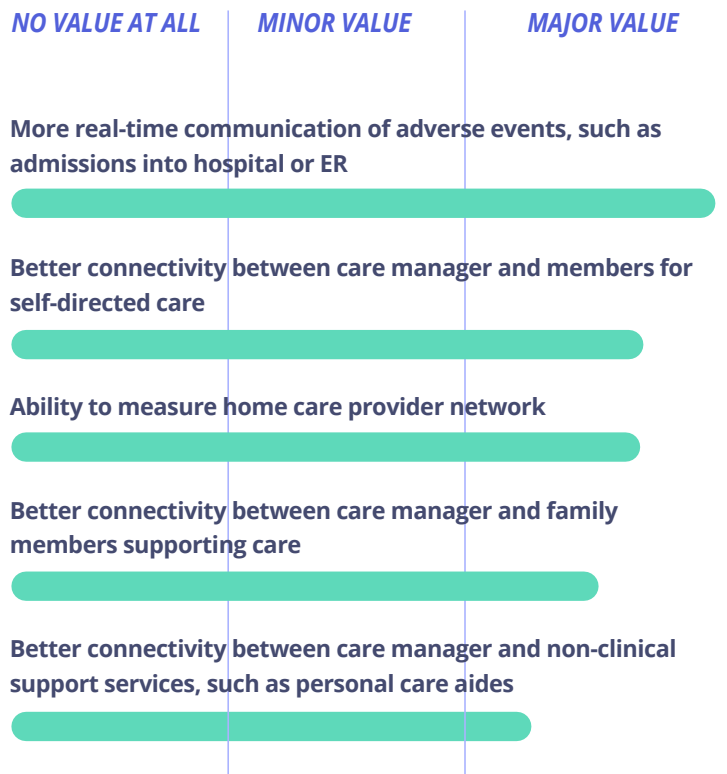**Better measure quality of care being given in the home**

When combined with increases in care manager satisfaction, respondents clearly feel that better communication technology could help them reach their quadruple-aim goals. Faster communication response times may also directly impact member retention and may positively influence member responses to CAHPS health plan surveys.

Care Managers Want Greater Transparency and Collaboration

Timely communication is necessary for meaningful collaboration. In addition to faster response times, four of the top five care manager technology "wants" center around better collaboration with in-home caregivers, both paid and unpaid.

MOST IMPORTANT TECH-ENABLED COLLABORATION CAPABILITIES

NO VALUE AT ALL	*MINOR VALUE*	*MAJOR VALUE*

More real-time communication of adverse events, such as admissions into hospital or ER

Better connectivity between care manager and members for self-directed care

Ability to measure home care provider network

Better connectivity between care manager and family members supporting care

Better connectivity between care manager and non-clinical support services, such as personal care aides

Unfortunately, the current processes and systems at many health plans do not enable care managers to truly collaborate in real-time to solve member issues. When asked to name the number one characteristic of their current system care managers responded with "limited insight" because there is little transparency between care manager, in-home care provider and family caregiver with regard to the care actually taking place in the home.

Widely adopted EVV solutions, used as a compliance tool to verify that an in-home visit occurred, are simply not built to provide the in-depth insights into the specific care being delivered in the home. The VP of Care Management at a multi-billion-dollar managed Medicaid plan explained that "many people confuse clinical platforms with EVV, but they are different. You have your EVV system to comply with state regulation and track visits, but it does not tell you about what happened during the visit like a clinical platform does."

Only 25% of respondents feel that their organization has the tools to accurately measure and respond in real time to the quality of care being delivered to members in the home. The bottleneck to quickly solving urgent member care needs appears to be a combination of outdated methods of communication, like phone, email and fax, a health plan's massive organizational structure and lack of real-time connectivity to all paid and unpaid/family caregivers.

Transparency Builds Trust and Strengthens Relationships

Care Heroes captures activities of daily living (ADLs) as well as clinical information so that care managers know exactly what is going on in the home and when. "I don't have to call my members or research authorization to find out who's in the home, what they are doing, and if they are doing it correctly. I simply go online to see what the care attendants have been doing" cites the care manager of the multi-billion-dollar managed Medicaid plan.

Her relationships with in-home care providers have become stronger, and through Care Heroes she can observe whether the same paid caregiver is caring for the member on a consistent basis, which has been proven to improve outcomes and star ratings. Providers also value the stronger relationships they have developed with the health plan care managers through Care Heroes because communication and collaboration are streamlined.

The Care Heroes platform brings the unpaid caregiver, such as a family member, into the fold by allowing this critical stakeholder to be the eyes and ears of the care manager on a daily basis in between paid caregiver visits. In another example when a family caregiver reached out directly through Care Heroes to the care manager regarding a critical member health issue, the care manager quickly reacted with potentially life-saving measures,

"within a matter of hours, my member was able to get her oxygen, her supplies ordered, and appointments set up with her providers"

– CARE MANAGER, MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR MANAGED MEDICAID PLAN

Better Technology Enables Higher Compliance

In addition to member wellbeing, the lack of real time ability to solve patient needs can impact a health plans bottom line. Take the recent New Jersey case in which the Office of the Inspector General of the US Department of Health and Human Services found significant non-compliance in the Medicaid managed

long-term services and supports (MLTSS) program and recommended imposing corrective action plans, fines, and financial disincentives for the plan administrators. The deficiencies found included a lack of (1) adequate planning and care management, and (2) conducting and documenting assessments and developing, reviewing, and updating beneficiaries' care plans.

With Care Heroes these deficiencies could be overcome because care managers are immediately alerted to issues and are able to proactively intervene so that members do not fall through the cracks.

Ease of Use Critical to Drive Adoption

Technology is only as good as its adoption, and ease of use is a major contributor. While only 6% of respondents in our survey said their process or system is "easy to use", care managers that use Care Heroes rate ease of use and efficiency very high because of its interface and ability to quickly communicate and coordinate with all key stakeholders. On the other side, leaders at in-home care agencies also report high levels of adoption. In fact, the nurse written about earlier, who received an answer in 15 minutes from the care manager had previously been skeptical of using "yet another" technology, but after that experience exclaimed "I'm sold" and became a champion of Care Heroes.

Everyone Agrees that Real-Time Communication and Collaboration is the Answer

As one can imagine, the vast majority of care managers surveyed strongly agree that it would be a positive thing to enable real-time collaboration with providers, aides, and family caregivers to improve care in the home. However, as highlighted in this research, they are lacking the proper tools to collaborate with these critical stakeholders.

With the right collaboration platform, transparency is gained, care is expedited, care manager satisfaction increased, and members are better cared for. Furthermore, health plans may lower PMPY cost by avoiding unnecessary hospitalizations, ER visits and SNF admissions.

Technology that impacts employee and patient experience, improves outcomes, and lowers cost not only supports the quadruple-aim framework but may lead to better CAHPS Health Plan survey scores. It is time for all health plans to upgrade their communication and collaboration methods and engage family caregivers to dramatically improve the quality of in-home care their members receive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CARE HEROES VISIT:
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