New Study Reveals Care Team and Family Member Connectivity Gaps in Hospice

Study raises concerns about hospice industry's ability to engage patients, family members and clinical care team members effectively

A new study reveals that hospice organizations are slow to adopt secure, modern collaboration capabilities that provide key connectivity points between patients, family members and clinical care team members – all of which are critical to engage in today's value-based care economy. While the rest of the healthcare industry rapidly adopts modern collaboration technology to improve patient and care team member engagement, the hospice industry lags behind with the majority of communication dependent on phone calls, voicemails and emails.

With more than 100 hospice leaders responding to a recent Porter Research study, 79% report that they still use the telephone as their primary means of communicating with patients (outside of face-to-face visits), and 66% use the phone, email or electronic health record (EHR) systems for care team member communications. Not only does this create significant risk for HIPAA violations, but it also impedes collaboration in the highly dynamic, multi-disciplinary world in which hospice and palliative care organizations operate.

This study comes at an inopportune time when hospice utilization is rapidly growing as more physicians are comfortable recommending the hospice benefit to their terminally ill patients. In fact, according to the Trella Health Industry Trend Report, Q3 2018, hospice utilization crossed the 50% threshold of Medicare decedents for the first time in 2018. As the competition for referral sources and for trained clinical resources heats up, hospices who are not equipping their teams with modern and secure collaboration capabilities will fall further and further behind.

Majority of hospices are still using unsecure, outdated communication tools to collaborate with patients, family members and each other.

Most popular communication mechanisms your organization uses to conduct care team communications and coordination today.

MOBILE APP 6%
EMAIL 43%
PHONE 19%
EMR 32%
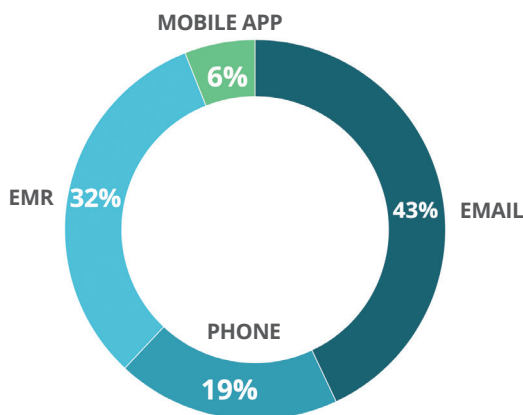
Porter Research, Sept. 2019

Most popular way your organization communicates with patients outside of face-to-face visits today.

VIDEO CHAT 2%
EMAIL 6%
TEXT MESSAGE 3%
PATIENT PORTAL 9%
PHONE CALL 80%
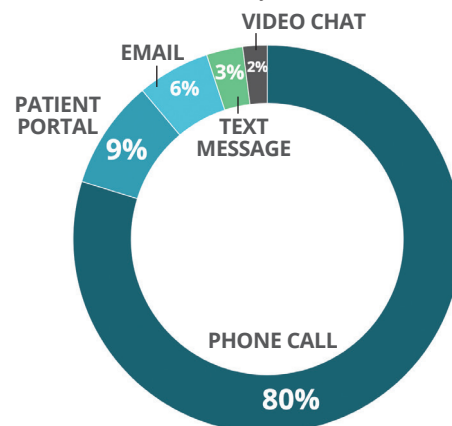
Porter Research, Sept. 2019

The Care Team Connectivity Gap

Home hospice organizations have complex care teams that are an intricate component of the daily care delivery cycle. More so in hospice than any other care setting, organizations must engage regularly with family members and loved ones who are typically deeply involved in the care decisions being made. Family members and non-clinical care team members, such as pastors, social workers, and home care aids need to be kept up to date in a timely manner to reduce confusion and frustration that often arise when hospices depend on phone calls, voicemails and emails.

Proactive, timely and complete communications with the family and non-clinical care team members can significantly impact an organization's satisfaction scores, quality measures and Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers & Systems (CAHPS) scores.

As a hospice patient's condition often changes on a daily basis, the full team of both non-clinical and clinical care team members, such as attending physicians, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and nurses, must be readily accessible to adapt quickly to these changes. If not, unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations can occur, disrupting the original intention of the home hospice benefit and driving up the total cost of care. In addition, when patients are hospitalized, they are required to revoke their hospice benefit.

Because of these complexities, the majority of the communication tools being used by hospice organizations today are less than adequate and do not provide the platform required for effective engagement.

In addition to the collaboration and communication challenges today's tools create, many hospice and palliative care organizations face serious staffing shortages. Today, the US has 13 hospice and palliative care specialists for every 100,000 adults 65 and older. A recent NIH study estimates that over the next 20 years, the patient population will need 10,640 – 24,000. The supply is expected to fall short by thousands.

To attract key talent and optimize the productivity of current staff, providing the right tools to allow them to focus on their passion – caring for patients – is critical.

Hospices must investigate modern technology solutions that make their clinical workers' daily workload easier to accomplish.

Hope is on the Horizon

The positive news from the Porter Research study is that a significant portion (39%) of hospices report that they intend to invest in new technology to help improve their care team member and patient/family engagement capabilities in the near future. Their needs center around more instantaneously connecting with both clinical and non-clinical care team members as well as being more secure and operating in a digital environment.

TOP CARE TEAM ENGAGEMENT WANTS

37% COMMUNICATE WITH MULTIPLE CARE TEAM

36% COMMUNICATE MORE INSTANTANEOUSLY

17% COMMUNICATED MORE SECURELY

9% COMMUNICATE WITH CARE STAKEHOLDERS OUTSIDE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

1% OTHER

TOP PATIENT ENGAGEMENT WANTS

39% ABILITY TO SUPPORT/ENGAGE IN REAL-TIME

20% ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE MORE SECURELY

10% ABILITY TO CAPTURE PATIENT SIGNATURES ELECTRONICALLY

13% ABILITY TO CAPTURE IN-HOME MEDICATION

6% CONFIGURABLE ASSESSMENT FORMS WITH SMART LOGIC

5% ABILITY TO BYPASS ON-CALL SERVICE TO REACH CLINICIAN DIRECTLY

4% ABILITY TO CAPTURE PAIN SCORES VIA MESSAGING TOOLS

800-863-9130 | www.citushealth.com | sales@citushealth.com

Selecting the Right Collaboration Solution for your Hospice Organization

For those who are considering investing in new technology solutions to better enable collaboration between care team members, family members and patients, they should keep in mind that there are many different solutions that only address part of the problem.

For example, secure text messaging can solve the security and real-time communication problem, but the majority of these tools cannot be integrated with the EHR system for audit purposes. Patient portals do not support real-time communications and often go unused, but they are typically secure. EHR-enabled tools can capture data and communications for the patient record, but most are limited in their ability to collaborate with multiple care team members, especially non-clinical members, in real-time.

Until recently, there has not been a collaboration platform available that accommodates the unique needs of hospice organizations. In late 2019, Citus Health launched its purpose-built collaboration and workflow automation platform to the hospice industry at the National Association of Home Care and Hospice (NAHC) conference.

A Purpose-Built Collaboration Platform

Originally designed by a post-acute care nurse who saw first-hand the challenges of communicating in real-time with her peers, family members and patients, Citus Health was built to enable secure, real-time communications with both clinical and non-clinical care team members who are crucial to the process of caring for patients once they leave the four walls of a healthcare facility. Plus, its open architecture and FHIR-based APIs allow for easy integration with all EHR systems.

Here are a few scenarios where a modern, purpose-built collaboration and communications platform can help hospices meet the unique and growing demands of their businesses:

· Create patient discussion groups that enable all stakeholders, including family members, to actively engage in real-time conversations about a patient's changing condition via text, photos or video chat to help avoid gaps in care and costly complications

· Establish escalation paths and have the system automatically manage these to ensure timely responses across patient, family member or clinical staff teams

· Capture all communications and embed into the patient's record for audit and/or training purposes

· Set role-based security access to information to ensure only those who are pre-authorized or designated to participate in the patient's care can see and exchange information

· Build and deliver family member satisfaction surveys, admission paperwork, incidence forms and bereavement packages electronically while also quickly capturing necessary e-signatures to expedite billing

· Empower on-the-go clinical staff to instantly and easily engage a supervisor or medical director in an in-home video consultation about a concern that needs to be resolved to reduce unpaid or excess visits; or with a patient or family member regarding slight schedule changes

· Capture medication and supply counts in the home electronically to avoid overstocking, which wastes valuable per diem dollars, or understocking, which results in unplanned visits or courier fees

Closing the Care Team Connectivity Gap

According to Definitive Healthcare Data, the vast majority (98%) of US hospitals had adopted an EHR system by the year 2018, which set in motion the pressure for members of downstream referral networks, like hospice organizations, to digitize their operations and use technology to improve efficiencies and patient experiences. Patient communication innovations, such as patient portals, saw a 1,287% increase over the next few years, presenting evidence that patient engagement is of significant importance.

But according to a recent Porter Research report, hospice organizations are falling further behind the majority of their referral sources when it comes to adopting modern patient and care team member communication technology.

As efficiency and patient outcomes become more prominent in the decision-making process hospitals and physicians follow to build their care network partners, hospices must make a more concerted effort to improve collaboration and communications capabilities.

Having the right technology platform in place will not only facilitate more dynamic, secure and inclusive care team and family member engagement, but it will also play a significant role in an organization's ability to compete effectively for referral sources and improve quality scores in today's value-based care economy. When all care stakeholders are better connected, everyone wins.

To learn more about how modern engagement technologies can help your hospice, visit **www.citushealth.com**.

START TODAY: Contact us at 800-863-9130 or visit CitusHealth.com

800-863-9130 | www.citushealth.com | sales@citushealth.com

CITUS HEALTH