

Population Health NEWS

Making a Case for Population Health

A Selected Case Study in Population Health Management...

Home Aide Training, Technology Spell Success for Older Population

Objectives:

Jewish Home Lifecare (JHL) and eCaring developed an innovative partnership, capturing real-time information about a patient's care, activities and clinical data derived from home care. The objectives of the program are:

- Improve care coordination efforts between JHL and Senior Health Partners (SHP).
- Avoid costly, serious events such as emergency department visits and hospitalizations, as well as doctor visits and unplanned nurse visits.
- Increase in-home caregiver engagement, resulting in greater employee satisfaction and retention.
- Reduce preventable readmissions through timely access to clinical, behavioral and medication adherence data from a patient's home.

Program Description: In 2013 JHL, a provider of healthcare services and assistance for elders in the New York metropolitan area, approached eCaring, a developer of cloud-based software that manages and monitors home healthcare services in real time, to help the organization reduce patient care costs, enhance care quality and increase in-home caregiver engagement, resulting in greater employee satisfaction, performance and retention.

To measure the impact of eCaring's technology, the two organizations created a two-stage trial in August 2013, using home aides from Home Assistance Personnel Inc. (HAPI), JHL's licensed home care service agency. The aides were trained and then interviewed one on one to ensure they understood how to use the eCaring software. They were interviewed again at three and six months after the inception of the program.

eCaring's system is comprised of an easy-to-use, icon-based interface for aides and caregivers to enter extensive patient care information regardless of their computer skills or English literacy; a capacity to store and share comprehensive information on patients' daily activities, their mental and physical states and changes in patients' normal patterns or conditions; an alert system to notify care managers about situations requiring immediate attention to keep problems from escalating; and evaluation of data to help determine performance and best practices.

Hosted on an iPad or Android tablet, eCaring integrates behavioral, clinical and medication adherence data. The platform can be used to manage all diseases, while at the same time it is customizable and configurable by population, condition, disease and individual.

The first stage of the trial included 30 dual eligibles—members of SHP, a managed long-term care plan owned by Healthfirst, a major New York health insurance company—from Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, who had congestive heart failure, diabetes, Alzheimer's and other chronic conditions.

The second stage, implemented a year later, targeted an additional 30 patients through a program with the United Hospital Fund and 1199 Services Employees International Union. A control group received what has been the standard practice of care for many years—home visit activities reported by telephone.

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There were four key areas of assessment:

- Impact on emergency room, hospital and other service utilization and related costs.
- Home care aide satisfaction with using the system and with training.
- Number of interventions tracked for hospitalizations, emergency room visits, in-home treatment responses, nursing visits and referrals.
- Member/patient satisfaction.

Results:

- \$300 per patient per month average cost savings.
- 400% return on investment per patient.
- More than 500 observations per patient per month entered by aides, covering activities of daily living, vital signs, mental and physical status and other key variables.
- An average of two to three alerts, notes and other communications per patient per month, including notes in Spanish that are easily manageable by JHL care managers.
- Alerts and notes effective in preventing problems from escalating, avoiding hospitalizations, readmissions and emergency department visits that were often the historical response of patients to the issues reported.
- Notes between aides and care managers related to physician comments during appointments, patient coaching and wound treatment.

Lessons Learned

The study revealed insights from using a collaborative care management approach based on real-time, healthcare information from the home:

- The program can reduce the cost and risk exposure for managed care organizations, and will be particularly meaningful for organizations being paid under capitated, performance, value or other fixed rates.
- Care managers and home healthcare aides using the eCaring system for communications created an effective team that was able to address critical patient issues.
- Computer literacy and language barriers did not prove problematic to home healthcare aides with limited English or technical skills using the eCaring system.
- Engaged home healthcare aides felt empowered by the real-time monitoring system and the rapid responses from care managers to information they input, enhancing the utility of their care reporting.

The training and use of eCaring indicated the potential to optimize the performance of the more than 1.7 million home health aides, who are a critical part of the care delivery system but often lack a voice or empowerment.