

EHR software delivers increased productivity and efficiency

SUCCESS STORY HOME HEALTH, HOSPICE, PALLIATIVE CARE



At a glance

Community

- Home Health, Hospice and Palliative Care

Organization

- Concord Regional VNA

Location

- Concord, NH

Challenges

- Cumbersome referral processes
- Costly manual transfers of scanned data to patient records
- Inefficient flow of information when transitioning patients across care settings

Solution

- Touchpoint Messaging in Homecare Advisor™

Results

- Increased efficiency and productivity
- Expanded annual referral processing from 8,000 to 9,200
- Reduction in referral generation time and costs

Concord Regional transforms workflow operations and referral processing after incorporating EHR technology

Concord Regional VNA (CRVNA) in Concord, New Hampshire is part of the Capital Region Health Care System. The VNA serves 41 communities in central New Hampshire. It has 378 staff members offering home care, hospice, palliative care (as part of Capital Region Palliative Care and Hospice), personal home services and wellness programming.

The referral process accounts for a significant portion of a homecare organization's business— 100 percent to be exact. Consequently, an agency's success depends highly upon its ability to market and maintain solid relationships with the referral sources and associated clinical teams. To maintain these relationships, referring agencies and especially referring physicians must:

- Understand the agency's strengths and capabilities
- Have confidence in the level of care their patients will receive
- Establish efficient communication and data exchange methods that enable and facilitate future care plan oversight by the referring physician

However, for any given geographical market, different homecare providers may have overlapping capabilities and similar physician confidence levels tied to increasing metrics/visibility/focus centered on patient outcomes. Thus, the question becomes: Outside of providing quality clinical care, how does a home health or hospice organization differentiate itself from its competitors and seize the opportunity to become the first choice among referral sources?

After implementing direct messaging, the referral process on both sides improved. Since implementation, the agency continues to reap the benefits of this new approach as their overall census continues to grow.

One answer is for an agency to focus on the usability of their referral intake processes. This will directly impact referring organizations and referral source processes and preferences across its spectrum of customers. By delivering a process that is flexible, your agency is sure to stand out thanks to quick accommodation of referral resources.

Challenge

The need for speed in the referral process is paramount. In fact, it can be critical to the continuity of care from one care facility to another. For example, the success of a full knee replacement and the best approach to mitigate associated risk factors may require a regular and systematic regimen of mobility related treatment. The physician who releases the patient to a home health scenario expects to transfer the patient without any gap in care. As such, the physician and associated referring office rely upon the ability to quickly identify home health referral options, initiate the referral, receive the case acceptance and have homecare delivered in a small window of time.

At CRVNA, most referrals were received through a fax server that required manual entry. From there, a referring hospital had to print and load an average of 25 pages per referral into the scanner and transmit to CRVNA's fax server. An intake clerk then had to manually transpose information from the scanned file into the patient's admission record.

Solution

Sending protected health information (PHI) requires secure protocols and a fully vetted exchange mechanism. Interoperability relies upon a common message structure that can be understood and quickly consumed by both sending and receiving systems. This also includes being involved in the review and acceptance of the referral and care giving process.

This has created a need to arm healthcare providers with a simple way to exchange data with external systems without elaborate development efforts, in this case, to facilitate the referral process.

Using well-equipped EHR software with a capable direct secure messaging utility allows referral sources to quickly generate referral documents and transmit them securely and electronically with just a few clicks.

CRVNA implemented Netsmart to take advantage of the Touchpoint Messaging functionality. The secure e-mail application has many of the familiar trimmings of a standard e-mail client: an inbox, a sent items folder, the ability to compose new messages to fellow direct secure messaging users and the ability to attach a variety of supported file formats. However, the real difference is that Touchpoint Messaging (based upon the industry's direct secure messaging standard) is an application that:

- Is certified by a health care industry alliance to securely exchange PHI, which means referrals can be sent and received with high confidence in data protection
- Enables referring organizations also employing a direct secure messaging client to send predefined patient-related document types (e.g. Continuity of Care Document) that direct messaging can render
- Is based upon common standards (such as HL7) that facilitate the ability of sending/receiving organizations to consume the data as use cases emerge for immediate system consumption and/or interpretation

Using well-equipped EHR software with a capable direct secure messaging utility allows referral sources to quickly generate referral documents and transmit them securely and electronically with just a few clicks.

The solution provides CRVNA with a capable, direct secure messaging utility that can quickly receive transmitted referrals, simultaneously disseminate information to system users and increase the efficiency of the referral intake process in a way that advances interoperability goals through the meaningful use of electronic data shared between disparate systems.

Results

After implementing direct messaging, the referral process on both sides improved. Since implementation, the agency continues to reap the benefits of this new approach as their overall census continues to grow.

These benefits include:

- ⦿ Efficiency and productivity: Increase in the number of referrals processed from 8,000 to 9,200 annually without any addition to office staff
- ⦿ Improved patient case information: Ability to receive a CCD from the hospital or physicians' offices, so the agency is getting more comprehensive information about the patient and the information is better organized and easily found
- ⦿ Better traceability for incoming and historical referrals
- ⦿ Improved efficiency for office staff by eliminating up to 15 minutes of follow-up per referral
- ⦿ Reduction in printing cost by saving in paper and toner for both the agency and physicians' offices

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About Netsmart

Netsmart designs, builds and delivers electronic health records (EHRs), solutions and services that are powerful, intuitive and easy-to-use. Our platform provides accurate, up-to-date information that is easily accessible to care team members in behavioral health, care at home, senior living and social services. We make the complex simple and personalized so our clients can concentrate on what they do best: provide services and treatment that support whole-person care.

By leveraging the powerful Netsmart network, care providers can seamlessly and securely integrate information across communities, collaborate on the most effective treatments and improve outcomes for those in their care. Our streamlined systems and personalized workflows put relevant information at the fingertips of users when and where they need it.

For 50 years, Netsmart has been committed to providing a common platform to integrate care. SIMPLE. PERSONAL. POWERFUL.