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FEBRUARY 2023

HME
When to
outsource RCM

IHC
5 tips for
preventing falls



THE TECH TRENDS TRANSFORMING CARE

WellSky, Honor, CliqSOFT CEOs describe dramatic change
+ How Elara Caring gets results with its own platform

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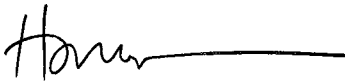
Several years ago, someone told me they didn't like that we call this issue of HomeCare the technology issue. Their argument was that the word "technology" was too broad—that really, we meant "software." Back then, they were probably right.

But today, when it comes to technology in the senior care space, we need to think as broadly as possible. It includes software, for sure, but also robots and digital assistants and whole-home fall detection systems and probably some technologies we haven't imagined yet. At January's CES (formerly the Consumer Electronics Show), companies debuted a smart wheelchair cushion that can detect pressure points, clothing that automatically sends healing electrical pulses to the wearer and even glasses that can caption in-person conversations for those with hearing loss. The examples go on and on.

Instead of focusing on the exciting new gizmos and devices in this issue, however, we wanted to hear from leaders in homecare about how technology is shifting today's approach to care. We look at how Elara Caring has integrated its ElaraConnect platform into every part of its business and the health outcomes that have resulted; hear from WellSky CEO Bill Miller about how technology can address social determinants of health; interview Honor CEO Seth Sternberg about staffing and tech; and learn the ways chatbots and other automated machine learning systems can solve business problems from QliqSOFT CEO Krishna Kurapati. The series starts on page 16.

We've also got great stories on other topics: the pros and cons of outsourcing your revenue cycle management, steps to working with clients on fall prevention, the latest on electronic visit verification and even how your voicemail can boost sales. We hope you enjoy.

Thanks for reading,



Hannah Wolfson

BE HEARD

We want to know what you think and how we can serve you better.

Send your comments and feedback to Editor Hannah Wolfson at hwolfson@cahabamedia.com. We'd love to hear from you!

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EDITORIAL

Editor

Hannah Wolfson | (205) 278-2825
hwolfson@cahabamedia.com

CREATIVE SERVICES

Art Director

Jessi Tygielski

Digital Project Manager

Matt Hodges

Web Developer

Greg Caudle

CIRCULATION

Subscription Changes & Inquiries

homecaremag@omeda.com | (800) 256-2785

ADVERTISING

Associate Publisher

Jim Harmon | (205) 933-0333
jharmon@cahabamedia.com

Sales Development Representative

Jill Kuerner | (205) 961-3378
jkuerner@cahabamedia.com

Client Services Representative

Sonya Crocker
scrocker@cahabamedia.com

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

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Brown & Fortunato, P.C.

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Publisher

Matthew G. Conroy

Vice President of Sales

Greg Meineke

Director of Finance

Brandon Whittemore

Director of Operations

Laurie Tisdale

1900 28th Avenue South, Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35209 • Phone: (205) 212-9402

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Viemed Invests \$2M in ModoHealth

Viemed Healthcare, Inc., a respiratory care and technology-enabled home medical equipment (HME) services company, announced that it has made a strategic investment in ModoHealth, a value-based care and patient management platform connecting payers, patients and post-acute providers. ModoHealth expects to use the proceeds of the investment to fund the expansion of its patient management network, which combines clinical tools, remote patient monitoring, data analysis and patient-centric engagement.

ModoHealth's technology enables partners across the care continuum to collaborate through a secure platform in order to treat numerous disease states, supporting joint care coordination,

evidence-based planning, tracking of patient engagement and reporting of outcomes. Payers seeking to develop, implement, and manage value-based arrangements can use the platform to reduce hospitalizations and overall utilization. Patients are able to access daily well-being check-ins, medication tracking and alerts, activities, lessons and telehealth. Viemed expects to leverage its connected health care expertise to treat patients in the ModoHealth network suffering from COPD, sleep apnea and other respiratory conditions.

In exchange for its \$2 million cash investment, Viemed received an 18-month secured convertible promissory note and Viemed will participate in the ModoHealth provider network, using the ModoHealth software platform to improve patient outcomes through enhanced patient engagement.

viemed.com, modohealth.com

Sunshine Health, UHC Offering Aide Training & Placement

Sunshine Health is partnering with United HomeCare (UHC) to offer free training to home health aides in south Florida to help meet staffing challenges.

Sunshine Health's support of UHC's

training program, known as Learn & Work "Collaborating for a Better South Florida," will provide access to in-person trainings to help more than 100 people become certified home health aides at no cost to them. After completing 52 hours of training, program graduates are immediately placed by UHC to provide in-home personal care to patients with complex needs.

Sunshine Health says it is committed to providing residents with complex medical needs enrolled in Florida's long-term care system access to the support they need in their homes to improve their quality of life and keep them living in their desired community setting for as long as possible.

sunshinehealth.com

LUCI Launches Open Source Access

After more than five years of research and development to build the wheelchair technology company LUCI, officials announced they are opening its platform to leading developers and research partners through a new program called LUCI Sandbox.

LUCI is a technology platform for wheelchair robotics, research and user health made up of a combination of proprietary sensors, advanced software and a collection of patented inventions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We want to make sure our readers know about upcoming event opportunities. Did we miss an event? Send info to hwolfson@cahabamedia.com.

Feb. 21-22

ACMESA Winter Meeting
Greensboro, NC
atlanticcoastmesa.org

March 4-6

ATA 2023
San Antonio, TX
americantelemed.org

March 25-29

National Home Infusion
Association Annual
Conference
Washington, D.C.
nhia.org

INDUSTRY VOICES:

"We are not prepared for the demographic change that is fast approaching. The federal government's focus on aging has developed from bottom up, without designated leadership. The result of this scattered approach is severely inadequate support for older adults in our country, which impacts quality of life and takes extraordinary tolls on communities and families—particularly those of color. We need leadership and vision to focus on the critical issues relevant to this growing cohort of our population."

—Katie Sloan, president and CEO of LeadingAge, on a letter she wrote to the White House urging the administration to create a robust, visible Office on Aging Policy

Sandbox makes the LUCI platform and developer tools available to select organizations and institutions, allowing them to use LUCI as a research tool to accelerate innovation.

This access means they can avoid the time and resources development phases usually require and instead start with proven, effective hardware, documented safety and previously unavailable data, the company said in a release.

“We created LUCI to solve real problems that exist for wheelchair users now, and Sandbox is another way for our team to collaborate with likeminded peers who are committed to doing the same,” said Jered Dean, co-founder and chief technology officer of LUCI.

The specifics of the program will vary with each partner based on specific needs and capabilities, which will be announced in the future. While this type of developer access is common in other industries through popular developer programs like Apple Healthkit and industry-university partnerships, Sandbox claims to be the first program of its kind in power mobility.

luci.com

Quipt Home Medial Acquires Great Elm Healthcare

Quipt Home Medical Corp. has bought Great Elm Healthcare, LLC, a division of Great Elm Group, Inc. that operates a line of respiratory-related durable medical equipment (DME) service locations across eight states in the Midwest, Southwest and Pacific Northwest and had \$60 million in revenue last year.

The purchase is priced at \$80 million, including \$73 million cash, \$5 million in assumed debt and \$2 million of Quipt common stock.

The acquisition adds seven new states for Quipt, giving the respiratory DME company 115 locations in 26 states. The move also brings Quipt 70,000 new patients, taking its total served to 270,000.

In a news release, Quipt said the move

“adds tremendous cross-selling opportunities in which Quipt may sell products in Great Elm locations, including ventilation and oxygen,” allows Quipt to onboard Great Elm’s sleep patients into its resupply patient, and is expected to create “opportunities to expand Quipt’s access for accretive tuck-in acquisitions.”

quiphomemedical.com

GAO Recommends CMS Tighten Checks on DMEPOS Eligibility

Most of the providers who were enrolled in Medicare under COVID-19-related waivers and then had their enrollments revoked were durable medical equipment, prosthetics and orthotics (DMEPOS) suppliers, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

As a result, the GAO recommend that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) institute fingerprint-based criminal background checks, increase the pace of revalidating provider eligibility and evaluate opportunities for improvement in planning for future emergencies. CMS concurred with GAO’s recommendations.

The GAO looked at 47 waivers and flexibilities that CMS issued during the pandemic, including changes to provider enrollment screening, such as waiving about 7,300 fingerprint-based criminal background checks for provider types deemed a high risk for fraud, waste and abuse. It also included postponing site visits for high- and moderate-risk provider types and postponing revalidating provider eligibility for all providers. In addition, CMS approved other waivers and flexibilities relating to clinicians’ scope of practice and training, particularly for rural areas.

The report found that about 220,000 providers enrolled under waivers and flexibilities from March 2020 through March 2022. DME providers made up a small amount—just 4%. But they were 83% of the 208 enrollments CMS later revoked after finding they were ineligible.

gao.gov

INDUSTRY MOVES

Dec. 1
John Carter Named VGM & Associates VP of Sleep & Respiratory Compliance



Dec. 2
Marketlab CEO Tom Hill Joins ABM Respiratory Board



Dec. 8
Harold Davis Named Director of Surveyor Services for HQAA



Dec. 20
Heidi Nicoll Becomes VP of Talent Management for Tomorrow Health



Jan. 5
Adaptive Imports Names Melissa Tally President & Clinical Director



Jan. 5
Jonathan Hadley Newest Managing Director of VERTESS



Jan. 6
Simon Close Promoted to President, Senior Care Division, 24 Hour Home Care



Jan. 10
Jeff Bevis New COO of Caring Senior Service



RENDEVER ACQUIRES AARP'S VIRTUAL REALITY PLATFORM

Rendever, a virtual reality (VR) company, announced its acquisition of Alcove, a consumer VR platform publicly available to families at home through their own VR headsets. The Rendever team has been co-developing Alcove with AARP since 2020. By bringing Alcove in-house, Rendever said, the company “is amplifying its reach through an integrated ecosystem of products that enable a better aging experience for seniors worldwide, regardless of where they live.”

Rendever and AARP began working together in 2017 through MassChallenge, a global network for innovators. While Rendever has traditionally focused on older adults living in senior living communities, hospice organizations and patients in hospitals, the acquisition of Alcove will accelerate the core mission

of Rendever and the impact of its technology.

“It’s clear that the future of aging relies on purposeful technology, and we see Alcove as a critical extension of the exciting future we’re building,” said Rendever CEO and co-founder Kyle Rand. “A well-designed metaverse strengthens relationships, builds communities, and gives us the means to immerse ourselves in new experiences. The opportunities Alcove presents to families at home are limitless, and we can’t wait to start delivering—the roadmap we have planned is thrilling.”

Rendever will be working together with brands in Alcove to elevate the aging experience. UHealth is among the first joining the effort to ease accessibility and enhance health and wellness options

for aging adults, and users can expect to see new branded experiences coming throughout 2023.

rendever.com



Joint Commission Deletes 10 Homecare Standards

The Joint Commission announced it is eliminating 168 standards, or 14% overall, and revising 14 others across its accreditation programs to streamline requirements and make them as efficient and impactful on patient safety, quality and equity as possible. That includes deleting 10 homecare standards and revising one.

The first tranche of standards deletions and revisions by program became effective Jan. 1, 2023. The standards reduction is the result of The Joint Commission’s comprehensive review, which was announced in September 2022.

The review focused on examining “above-and-beyond” requirements—that is, those that go beyond the regulatory requirements of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Conditions of Participation (CoPs) and are not on crosswalks to the CoPs. The Joint Commission also conducted quantitative analyses of scoring patterns and tested for redundancy.

CMS approved the recommended discontinued standards after confirming they do not diminish any CMS regulatory requirements. A second tranche of standards is under consideration for elimination or revision, and a second announcement of burden reduction is anticipated in approximately six months.

jointcommisson.org

CAIRE Buys MGC Diagnostics

CAIRE Inc., a global manufacturer of oxygen therapy and on-site generation systems, has finalized the acquisition of MGC Diagnostics Holdings, Inc. (MGC). According to CAIRE, the acquisition strengthens the company’s focus on diagnostic technologies, expanding its expertise in serving patients throughout the progression of pulmonary disease.

Through this expansion of its portfolio of personal portable and stationary oxygen therapy solutions and larger onsite generation solutions, CAIRE adds MGC’s brand of non-invasive cardiorespiratory diagnostic systems, accessories,

and consumables for the detection, classification, and management of cardiorespiratory disease.

Established in 1977, MGC is the number two player globally in the cardiorespiratory diagnostics sector. In addition to headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, headquarters, MGC has facilities in Belgium, Germany, France, and Australia with more than 200 employees. The company has a broad portfolio of products anchored by its pulmonary function testing systems, cardiopulmonary exercise systems, spirometers, flow sensors, gas analyzers and associated consumables.

caireinc.com



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HOMECARE ROUNDTABLE:

E-Prescribing 101: What you need to know

ON DEMAND

Have you heard a lot about e-prescribing lately? Ready to ditch the fax and other outmoded technology? Wondering how it really works? At this virtual roundtable you'll be able to get answers and hear from the experts.

Panelists:

Nick Falkson - Product Manager
Reliable Respiratory

Dr. Jill E. Vollbrecht, MD - Endocrinologist
Grand Traverse Internal and Family Medicine

Reid Berman - Director of Business Development
Parachute Health

Kevin Ackermann - Vice President of Customer Success
Parachute Health

HOST: Hannah Wolfson - Editor
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HME Measures Get on the (Omni)bus

Year-end budget bill boosts industry

By Hannah Wolfson

In the final days of 2022, Congressional leaders put together a far-ranging \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending package that rolled in several measures pushed by home medical equipment (HME) advocates. It was called a “major win” by the American Association for Homecare (AAHomecare) and it:

- Extends the 75/25 blended Medicare rate for non-competitive bid area (CBA)/non-rural suppliers through either the remainder of the COVID-19-driven public health emergency (PHE) or Dec. 31, 2023, whichever comes later
- Prevents across-the-board 4% Medicare cuts for 2023 and 2024 that would have been triggered by the application of provisions in 2010 pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) budget legislation
- Grants a two-year extension for telehealth waivers established during the PHE
- Includes language from legislation that would set a national payment rate for disposable negative pressure wound therapy devices (HR 2356 and S 2363)
- Includes language from bills that would allow Medicare to cover compression treatment equipment for lymphedema treatment (HR 3630 and S 1315)

The Senate passed the omnibus bill on Dec. 22 and the House quickly responded a 225-201 vote for passage on Dec. 23.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? >>

AAHomecare has set an ambitious federal agenda for 2023, and it includes a push to further extend the 75/25 blended non-rural, non-CBA Medicare reimbursement rates—or to make them permanent.

INDUSTRY VOICES:

“I’m incredibly proud of the persistent grassroots advocacy that has secured these impactful, bottom-line wins for HME. We have been working to secure and extend the 75/25 rates for several years, and this success is the result of your calls, emails, and meetings with your legislators as well as a sustained presence on Capitol Hill. We also appreciate the leadership of Sen. John Thune (R-SD), Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) for their work pushing the CARES Act relief forward during negotiations on the Omnibus bill.”

—Tom Ryan
President & CEO of AAHomecare

WHAT’S NOT INCLUDED?

Provisions from HR 6641, legislation pushed by HME supporters to apply a 90/10 blended rate in former CBAs, is not part of the omnibus bill.

LEARN MORE A full list of Medicare-related items included in the initial package can be found here:





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AND CONNECTING.

The National Association for Home Care and Hospice (NAHC) is the premier trade association championing your organization, employees, and patients. We serve as your chief advocate — let's continue to fight for the advancement of the industry together. Become a member today!

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- Marketplace
- Career Center
- Member-only Discounts
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- Mentoring Program
- NAHC Online Community
- & MUCH MORE!



[NAHC.ORG/JOIN](https://www.nahc.org/join)

Busting Old Stereotypes on the Front Lines of Homecare

Why we must fight negative assumptions about aging

By Rich Paul



RICH PAUL is the chief partnership officer for SYNERGY HomeCare, a nonmedical in-home care provider serving 39 states. Visit synergyhomecare.com.

I've spent the bulk of my career focused on building strategic partnerships that enhance service delivery in several health care sectors, including homecare. I'm a self-professed "nuts and bolts" kind of guy where small tweaks can often make big changes.

But I'm focused on the big picture as well. And something came into my view recently that is sure to make a significant impact on our industry.

That is, how we talk about aging.

As a society, we often don't like to talk about aging and all the things that come along with it. That may be why we experience pervasive ageism and a negative connotation to growing older.

A recent conference sponsored by the trade publication Advertising Week attracted members of creative industries such as marketing, technology and culture to bring key issues and ideas to the forefront. This four-day event with more than 800 speakers drew thousands in the advertising industry.

I noticed that AARP was involved in two prominent sessions: "The Rise of the 50+ Tech Consumer" and "Why Ageism Must Be Part of the DE&I (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) Discussion." Martha Bourdreau, AARP's chief communications & marketing officer, was joined on the stage by Kristin Flanik, who is president and CEO of the advertising agency power BBDO NY.

First of all, congratulations to AARP for bringing these topics to the forefront. It is fantastic that ageism is being addressed by the advertising industry, which tends to

ignore older demographics because they are not considered "target markets." As they wrote in their session description, those over 50 make up 47% of the U.S. population and drive more than \$8.3 trillion in annual economic activity. Clearly, the aging demographic should not be ignored.

But the aging population is hindered by stereotypes in advertising. It wasn't that long ago that E-Trade received negative reactions to its "This Is Getting Old" commercial during the 2018 Superbowl. The following year, Fast Company noted that ads geared toward older consumers tended to be condescending at best and offensive at worst. More recently, author Ken Dychtwald addressed the continuation of ageism in advertising in an AARP article, saying "ads that show contempt for older people are still far too common."

That's why I appreciated a recent article in New York Magazine's recurring column, "The Strategist." Staffers put together a 57-question survey for Strategist readers 65 and older. Included were questions about their most beloved clothing brands, their most coveted electronics and the gifts they love to use.

Guess what? They are busting stereotypes! They are interested in looking good and feeling good. Sixty-one percent shop online at least once a week. The stationary bike is a big post-retirement buy. Hoka and Nike are mentioned as prominent shoe brands. They debate the merits of Kindles vs. iPads.



This doesn't sound like the end of the road for an aging population. And that's great, since we know that by 2035 there will be more people 65 and older than those 18 and younger for the first time ever.

Those of us working on the front lines with an older population should pay attention to these trends and share them broadly. We are the ambassadors of the aging process, which is why we're in a great position to influence how we talk about aging. Here are some ways to do it.

1 Change the language.

Take a look at "Words Up: A Guide to Inclusive Language," a report from an advertising agency that tackled numerous aspects of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), including ageism. After addressing stereotypical ads, they came up with a series of words that should be welcomed and those to avoid:

- Adopt these words: "older," "an elder," "mature," "wise," "seasoned," "experienced"

- Avoid these words: "old person," "golden years," "elderly"

Personally, I'm on a mission to eliminate the use of term "elderly." Getting older is part of life. "Elderly" connotes an affliction, not a life stage.

2 Focus on later semesters.

Our SYNERGY HomeCare gerontologist Dr. Macie Smith refers to aging as "another semester in life." Think about high school and college. Weren't our last semesters so much better than the early ones? Aging is part of life's education. Our clients are still learning, doing, growing, caring and loving. Let's work to always share these examples. And we should always be trying to learn from them, and then share their wisdom, as we all work to show these later semesters should be welcomed, not feared.

3 Embrace positivity.

Unfortunately, many of us are dealing with older people who have physical and cognitive concerns. But that shouldn't stop

us from saying wonderful things about our clients and what they have achieved—and are achieving—in life. Let's emphasize the joys we bring our clients, the joys they bring us, the pleasures in their days and the things they've done and learned. During our "SYNERGY Effect" ad campaign, we focused on how we "propel lives forward." We all do that every day. Let's make sure we share it.

4 Say something.

I was on a video conference recently and one of the participants on the call said, "I was in a store and this old cashier lady..." I stopped the call and politely said, "Why did you say 'old cashier lady?' Isn't it great that she's able to live her life and still work?" Sure, it's not easy to correct someone, but we should all do it.

I've concluded that even though I'm not a marketer, I am in marketing. The interactions we have every day provide us with great insight in the positives of aging. Let's commit to showcasing them. **HC**

Keep It Simple When It Comes to Software

It's time to move to all-in-one homecare management systems

By Josh Hough



JOSH HOUGH is managing director at CareLineLive, a UK-based monitoring solution for the homecare industry. The company began development in 2012 and the first version of its complete management system for care agencies launched in 2015. The company now has clients in more than seven countries.

Most businesses have multiple operational processes and workflows that make their organizations tick. In banking, for example, the onboarding of new customers is a complex process with many steps involved, from filling in the initial form to uploading documents, identification verification and credit checks. The ease of this process can even determine whether or not you choose a particular bank.

In the homecare sector, because of the many different processes needed to provide high quality person-centered care—as well as to comply with the regulatory requirements of organizations like the Care Quality Commission—many care providers see a single software solution as unsuitable for the entire range of tasks that need to be carried out.

This explains why we usually see a system for each separate process: for example, a rostering and care management system to ensure the efficient rostering of service user visits with available and compatible carers; a different system

to ensure compliance with regulatory standards, including the easy production of evidence; another for management and business reporting; and then, of course, one for generating staff payroll and client invoicing, calculating holiday pay and managing staff reviews and qualifications.

On top of all that, care workers also need to maintain comprehensive and accurate time-sensitive records about their clients, care visits, care planning and incident reports and manage medication with trackable completions and notes.

Homecare agencies also need to have a process in place to help their carers manage their travel time—not just to improve productivity but also (especially with the soaring cost of living) to reduce fuel costs. Some will want to pay their caregivers for mileage and travel time, and these processes are very time consuming without suitable software tools.

Providers should also have systems that would allow real-time information sharing between location-bound office

The time may have come to re-evaluate the many systems that have been adopted along the way & look for the single solution that can drive your care business into 2023.



staff and mobile care workers. And 24/7 communication with the wider care circle that includes family and loved ones, community health professionals and emergency services has become essential.

In-home care providers need systems that effectively and efficiently manage all of these multiple processes. However, the most fitting response to this challenge may not be adopting multiple systems for each of these processes, but rather having one single solution.

Why an All-in-One System? Why Now?

With the advancement of cloud-based software solutions since 2015, there are now a number of homecare software providers that aim to offer an all-in-one solution for these multiple processes.

All-in-one solutions offer many benefits. First, they provide increased productivity, since users don't have to switch back and forth between different software. This saves time and money. Staff are able to work faster, accomplishing the same tasks on a tighter schedule without needing to juggle their work across multiple systems. Because staff are trained on a single system, there is less confusion and more efficient working

processes. Once staff is trained, productivity increases as employees don't need to switch between systems.

Secondly, there is no need for duplicate data input into multiple software systems and no worries about data syncing between multiple systems. Having a single pipeline can make data entry easier and reporting more robust with helpful insights. There is no need for integration between software systems—for instance, between care planning and rostering systems. And if one of your systems decides to roll out new functionality, there is no worry about integration with the other software you are using.

Costs for all-in-one solutions are generally lower because you are only paying for a single system and not for multiple software licenses, with the added advantage that you only have one supplier relationship to manage.

Finally, cloud-based software has the capability to grow with your business. New features are constantly rolled out seamlessly, and these are all included in the subscription price you pay, so there's no need to worry about extra costs in the future. Subscription-based pricing also allows for

support and future enhancements to be included in the monthly fees.

The Bottom Line

Just as in any other sector, homecare agencies need to look at their processes and workflows and determine how they can be made more efficient for the overall running of the business, for users and for their clients. The time may have come to re-evaluate the many systems that have been adopted along the way and look for the single solution that can drive your care business into 2023.

Of course, no business would be able to manage 100% of its processes with just one overarching all-in-one software solution. Some processes, such as accounting, human resource management and project management, already have sophisticated solutions from the likes of Xero, Sage and WorkDay, and homecare management software shouldn't strive to reinvent the wheel to incorporate features for those kinds of processes.

Instead, solutions should aim to enable easy data interchange so that smooth service is provided and time is given back to carers to do what they do best. **HC**

Preparing for the Storm

Hard times are a great time to go on offense

By Gregg M. Shoppman



GREGG M. SCHOPPMAN is a partner at FMI Corporation, management consultants and investment bankers. Schoppman specializes in the areas of productivity and project management. He also leads FMI's project management consulting practice. He has completed complex construction projects in the medical, pharmaceutical, office, heavy civil, industrial, manufacturing and multifamily markets. He holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in civil engineering, as well as a Master of Business Administration. Contact him by email at gregg.schoppman@fmicorp.com. Visit fmicorp.com.

Business planning for 2023 might feel similar to an idyllic island getaway, complete with thatched huts, white sand beaches and a slight breeze blowing across the shoreline.

However, just on the horizon, there are dark clouds billowing and the local weather forecaster doesn't seem to have an accurate projection on the storm's trajectory. Will the storm hit, or will it just float on by? Do we board up the Tiki bar, or keep the patrons fully served?

Similarly, the homecare world is coming off another round of high-performing years. There were certainly headwinds in the form of product shortages, price increases and the ever-present labor woes, but you persevered. The main cause for pause was the continual threat of recession or economic pullback.

Where does this leave a homecare business owner developing an effective strategy for the year(s) to come? Is it time to batten down the hatches and expect the worst, or is it time to play offense?

Preparation Should Begin Well Before the Storm

If a storm were raging on that picturesque paradise, would the islanders say to themselves, "Maybe we should slap up some plywood," or would they have prepared themselves well in advance, shoring up their village and ensuring they had emergency provisions on hand?

The same concept holds true for this economic cycle: Even if the market

continues to falter, preparations should have been made well before the crisis arrived. Put another way, don't be caught in a raging typhoon, hanging boards on the wall of a house while the wind is whipping the ladder out from underneath you.

Preparation should begin today—not tomorrow, not in another month, but immediately to be acted upon.

Contrarian Logic

Winston Churchill said, "Never waste a good crisis." And there is something to be said for capitalizing on a down market. Too often, businesses hunker down during a storm and try to ride out a weak economy.

Assuming the preparations were done and the business is situated properly, this might be an opportune time to play offense. Are there new markets or geographies that will be ripe after the storm? Are there acquisition targets that would be excellent complements to your business?

Hunkering down can also be dangerous. It presents the imagery of your business and its leaders taking a defensive posture, when quite possibly it would be better to be seen actively in the marketplace. Furthermore, there is also a concern that the organization may lose sight of initiatives, such as internal communication and its own people, that could be detrimental to long-term health.

Additionally, even in the worst economic conditions, there will always be winning sectors. Harkening back to the

Great Recession, while many segments of industries were decimated, there were also shining stars that stabilized many businesses. Put another way, a business does not have to exactly parallel the economic plight of the country, and it can chart its own path—assuming it has thought ahead. Diversification takes great forethought and strategy.

Taking Inventory

No, this isn't about liquidating stores of inventory in the warehouse. This is about reflecting on the business and asking the tough questions relative to the current situation.

The most important piece of advice is to avoid complacency. It is a word that makes most business leaders cringe, but complacency is also bred through comfort. If a business has been profitable, it is easy to think that the great times will never go away.

Great business leaders should use this recession inventory checklist to reflect on the position of their company and ensure that it is adequately developing an action plan now to attack weak points before the tempest strikes.

✔ Business Development

- Do you have strong business development activity, or are you simply answering the phone?
- Do you have active relationships in the business community, or are you the last organization people turn to?
- Have you actively examined your distribution of work across niches and/or customers? What is the percentage or distribution? What are the margins among those niches or customers?
- Are you surprised by where your best referrals come from?
- Do you chase projects or customers?
- Do you ever find yourself saying, "There is no way that other company or agency can do it for that price ..." only to see the competition around year after year?



✔ Project Execution

- Are you executing flawlessly, or have you developed some bad habits?
- Are you really strategizing your work, or are you checking boxes?
- Are you good at collecting receivables, or have you gotten sloppy?
- Are you seeing margin erosion and don't really know why the fade is there, but figure that you are at least still making money?

✔ Talent Development

- Have you been routinely developing your people, or have you been "too busy?"
- What is the temperature or the morale of your team in a good economic climate?
- Do you blame flight issues solely on compensation?
- Have you been actively working on succession issues and filling gaps as people have retired?
- If there were an economic crisis, how would you prioritize your team members?
- Lastly, if you didn't have the time to develop the team when you were busy, how will you develop the team when there is no work?

✔ Innovation

- What was the last new thing you rolled out within the organization?
- How have you encouraged your team to experiment and try new things when times were good?
- Have you invested in the company?
- Do you think of these innovation items as simply technological achievements?

Answering any of these questions incorrectly is not cause for a flogging. In fact, most businesses have had their fair share of challenges. During the peak of the pandemic, it was hardly blue skies and rainbows. Business leaders were adjusting to an entirely new way of doing business as the world morphed, all while an exponential number of both positive and negative stimuli were influencing the industry.

However, this is a call to action for all business leaders to not just prepare a cut-and-paste business plan, but, rather, to challenge the entire strategic direction of their organizations for the long term. It's worth doing.

And hopefully, after the storm passes, we can all sip fruity drinks on that white sand beach. **HC**



A New Platform for Care

How Elara Caring relies on technology to keep clients out of the hospital

By Hannah Wolfson

Technology is often seen as something cold and uncaring. Think of all the movies, books and other cultural touchpoints featuring unfeeling machines, starkly clinical environments and people described as “robotic” to point out their lack of humanity.

But at Elara Caring, technology is designed to make the business of care more caring, not less. The company calls it a high-touch, personalized approach that focuses on the vitality of its patients. In fact, Elara, which is one of the largest providers of in-home care and growing quickly, has made tech central to its operations with the use of its ElaraConnect platform.

“ElaraConnect is transforming how Elara delivers care,” said Regis Zamudio, who oversees the care platform in his role as vice president of ElaraConnect. “From the moment a patient or client referral is received, ElaraConnect offers our care team a ‘toolbox’ of resources to keep that person at home and out of the hospital. It has further strengthened collaboration between our service lines, helping our people think holistically and cross functionally.”

A Process of Evolution

Some of today’s technology is rooted in the organizations that formed Elara Care—National Home Health Care, Great Lakes Caring and Jordan Health Care. The three companies merged in 2018 to form Elara.

At the time, company leadership highlighted the company’s technological and

care model. The new company, HomeCare wrote in 2018, intended “to create one of the most technologically advanced platforms in the country and to significantly improve clinical outcomes while enhancing the patient experience.”

Today, Elara Caring is in 16 states, with about 32,000 caregivers in more than 200 locations.

It offers skilled home health, hospice, personal care, behavioral health and palliative care and serves more than 60,000 patients per day.

Some of the technologies were driven by company leadership, Zamudio said, while others grew organically until they were absorbed into ElaraConnect. Health tech partners—including Medalogix, AlayaCare, ServiceNow, Bamboo Health and Careport Connect—have and continue to drive innovation, he added.

Today, ElaraConnect leverages advanced technology, data, insights and services to anticipate patient needs by proactively monitoring and engaging current and previous patients/clients.

“These tools empower Elara’s dedicated caregivers to proactively provide the very best care to our patients and clients, and connect them with appropriate services across our five service lines...,” Zamudio said. “It ensures we’re meeting patients’ and clients’ comprehensive and often complex needs, focusing on their vitality with a high-touch,

personalized approach.”

The platform encompasses four programs:

TECHNOLOGY HAS HELPED ELARA:

2x the average number touchpoints home health patients experience

Reduce costs by

25%

Cut hospital readmission rate by

50%

HomeCare Asks:

People say the future of in-home care lies in technology. Where do you see things going next? Do you think it's more of what Elara is currently doing or might there be greater leaps in a few years?

Zamudio: Technology and data will increasingly be leveraged to personalize the care experience in a timely way to produce better health outcomes for patients. Our ability to effectively perform in value-based agreements will require better outcomes (example: lower readmission rates, diversion from skilled nursing facilities, member retention for health plans, better star ratings in Medicare Advantage). Our ability to attract and retain the best talent will require removal of non-value added tasks for caregivers and back office staff, all being enhanced by technology solutions with ML/AI based solutions.

Remote patient monitoring is going to play a more critical role in providing data to care providers. The medical devices space is expected to grow close to 30% a year through 2026, with vital sign monitors expected to grow the highest during the period. This aligns with our strategy as we'll be doubling the number of monitoring devices available for our patients/clients over the coming years to yield the greatest possible impact of our technology and further help meet the needs of providers looking for additional data about their most at-risk patients.

Additionally, artificial intelligence and data-based risk assessment capabilities will be needed for homecare providers to develop personalized care plans and know when patients are most likely to have an adverse health event. We're in the middle of enhancing our change-in-condition program for Personal Care clients and adding in risk-ranking capabilities using customized algorithms. Add on top of that artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities, we'll soon be able to know our highest risk patients and track how their risk profile is changing over time using all the data we're gathering on a daily basis. We're piloting similar technology for our Skilled Home Health patients as well. Aggregating this data into something meaningful will give us the ability to act quickly on our feet and change care plans to intervene when a client's risk profile changes.

- **ElaraConnect Engage**, a change-in-condition platform for patients in skilled home health care and clients receiving personal care
- **ElaraConnect Monitor**, a remote patient monitoring (RPM) program that targets patients with the highest risk of hospitalization
- **Check-In**, a post-discharge follow-up program that monitors our previous home health patients after they are discharged
- **Transition**, which identifies end-of-life needs for home health patients and transitions them to hospice services as appropriate.

Show Us the Numbers

Zamudio said the data—and there is a lot of it, thanks to the nature of the platform—helps highlight ElaraConnect's effectiveness.



PROGRAM SUCCESSES:

30-day rehospitalization rates in the Monitor program were 17% lower than the national average

“For example, we have doubled the number of average touchpoints received by home health patients while reducing costs by 25% and cutting our hospital readmission rate by more than 50%, he said. “We have also been heralded by patients, clients and families, who have awarded Elara a Net Promoter Score of 89—an indication of customer appreciation and loyalty unheard of in the home health arena.”

Zamudio also shared some program-specific data with HomeCare. Take the Monitor program, which uses RPM to keep tabs on high-risk patients. Those patients, which are 25% higher risk, actually had 30-day rehospitalization rates that were 17% lower than the national average. In addition, 90% of the Monitor program patients reported that the telehealth program makes them feel supported by their health care team.

Connectivity was also important for the Engage program, which monitors home health and personal care clients to track any changes in their condition. Last year, the platform yielded nearly 100,000 connections with home health

Transition patients in hospice were 17% less likely to die within the first week of services

patients and triaged more than 1,000 alerts per month on average, all within 30 minutes.

“And last year, patients enrolled in our Transition program—meaning they transitioned to hospice—were 17% less likely to die within the first week of services, exemplifying how we’re identifying needs sooner and getting patients appropriate care at end of life, to produce longer lengths of stays consistent with the intention of the Medicare Hospice Benefit,” Zamudio said.

Moving Forward

While the numbers are highlights, Zamudio said that the data itself collected by the platform is also impacting operations.

“While we’re gathering more data than ever, being able to sift through the massive amounts of information in an efficient and automated manner not only creates efficiency but enables leadership to make critical decisions about how we operate and where we focus our energy and attention,” he said. “Having a data analytics team to build reporting, dashboards, and insights for the organization is a requirement to be successful today. We’re lucky to have a

The Engage program triaged more than 1,000 alerts per month on average, all within 30 minutes

phenomenal team of really intelligent people working on the back end to give the operational leaders what they need to drive success and quality.”

Elara also continues to work with tech partners to fuel innovation. The company recently announced a partnership with ServiceNow in an effort to improve clinical and operational workflows with automated appointment scheduling, scheduling and shift management, travel route guidance, pre-visit management and digital documentation.

“For example, one project underway is schedule optimization in our Personal Care Services service line. This will allow us to improve job satisfaction among Elara caregivers while simultaneously improving the experience for our clients who are happier when they have consistency in caregivers,” he said. “Quality of care also improves when the same care teams work with patients/clients on a regular basis.” **HC**

Hannah Wolfson is the editor for HomeCare media.

Making a Deeper Connection

How the power of technology can address social determinants of health

By Bill Miller

Imagine you are leaving the hospital after an extended illness or a severe injury. You are set to receive follow-up care from a home health care nurse. You have a list of medications that you will need to pick up at the local pharmacy. Your path to recovery seems well-established. But after a week, you're back in the hospital.

What happened?

For many Americans, this is unfortunately an all-too-common situation. Perhaps a lack of transportation means there's no way to get your prescription, and so your fever spikes. Or you can't afford follow-up care, so you cancel your appointments, which leads to an infected wound. Those non-medical factors, known as social determinants of health, play a significant role in a person's overall health and well-being. In fact, clinical care impacts only 20% of a patient's health. That leaves 80% affected by social determinants.

"Whole-person care" is a bit of a buzzword these days, but more and more, providers and payers are beginning to recognize the

importance of ensuring that all of a patient's needs are met—and that goes beyond just the physical ones.

The catch? It's easier said than done.

Increasing Focus on Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are becoming integral to effective care. The health care industry is slowly getting on board with this, which we can see in the increase in value-based purchasing agreements, the expansion of supplemental benefits in Medicare Advantage plans (such as food and transportation services and general living support), and the popularity of health care and community care partnerships. There are two main factors at play:

>>The Economic Impact:

Delivering health care is expensive. That's why so many stakeholders are invested in the success of value-based care, a reimbursement model in which payments are based on the quality of care provided,

rather than the quantity of services provided. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is aiming to have half of Medicaid and commercial contracts on value-based plans by 2025. Because value-based care focuses on performance, addressing social determinants can help providers better understand and manage that performance.

>>The Potential for Improved Health Outcomes:

Addressing social determinants of health at both the patient and population levels reduces health disparities and improves health outcomes. Many studies have validated this, including a December 2022 case study involving Reading Hospital, a 714-bed acute care hospital in Berks County, Pennsylvania. Reading Hospital used a \$4.5 million grant from CMS to implement the Accountable Health Communities model and assess whether addressing the social needs of local Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries impacted total health care costs and inpatient and outpatient health care utilization. What they found was nothing short of astonishing: By alleviating food insecurity in their community, emergency department utilization, hospital readmissions, and—yes—health care costs all decreased by 30% or more.

The Role of Technology

Today's providers are being held accountable for reaching population health goals while trying to reduce costs. So it's critical that they have the right tools to identify the

socioeconomic drivers of poor outcomes and higher costs and the strategies to combat them. That's where technology comes in.

First, by connecting the continuum: It's estimated that up to \$265 billion worth of care services for Medicare fee-for-service and Medicare Advantage beneficiaries could shift from traditional facilities to the home by 2025. When more care is delivered outside of a hospital setting, where there is round-the-clock monitoring and staffing, it's essential that we use technology to facilitate coordination and communication among providers. Traditionally, medical and non-medical caregiving has been fragmented. Closed-loop referral systems can power collaboration between health care providers and social services providers to ensure patients get the services they need and that all members of the care team are kept informed about a patient's overall well-being. Patient engagement tools can also play a role here by giving patients themselves the ability to share their needs and to communicate directly with their caregivers.

Then, equipped with data on the social determinants of health, providers can define and document the increasing complexity of their patients and transform care with integrated services and community partnerships to help meet the needs of their patients. That will go a long way to address the health equity issues plaguing our nation.

Assessment tools that capture social determinants of



health data in a consistent and structured way will help providers better serve their patients by considering non-medical issues that may be affecting their health; facilitate better outcomes by connecting patients to community service providers to address specific needs; build closer relationships with payers, other health care providers and community-based organizations; and ultimately increase funding and reimbursement by enabling the ability to participate in value-based care.

Conclusion

Whole-person care and acknowledging the increasing importance of social determinants of health are becoming top priorities for payers and providers. These are essential to improving patient outcomes and reducing high health care costs. Fortunately, it's becoming easier to connect clinical care with social care to address social

determinants of health through the use of smart technology that can help us achieve lasting outcomes.

Technology can be used to make sure no patients slip through the cracks by opening the lines of communication and connecting providers across the continuum. We're also starting to make the data work for providers, using it to identify where health inequities exist and how we can help facilitate specific interventions to address and to measure the impact of those interventions.

There's still a long way to go. But I'm confident we can make huge strides in health equity in the coming years and close the gaps that are hurting millions of Americans.

The time is now. Let's get to work. **HC**

Bill Miller is CEO of the health care technology firm WellSky. Learn more at [wellsky.com](https://www.wellsky.com).

Expanding the World's Capacity for Care

Honor CEO Seth Sternberg on tech's role in tackling the care crisis

By Hannah Wolfson

Seth Sternberg didn't expect to go into the care business. He started out at IBM, then co-founded an instant messaging and social network service provider that he and his partners sold to Google—where he then started working.

But when his mother started to slow down, he decided to focus on caring for aging adults. In 2014, he and his partners founded Honor, scaled a homecare agency, built a national network of agencies and developed a technology platform to run them.

In 2021, Honor bought Home Instead—which called itself the world's largest homecare franchise company—expanding its reach in terms of care. It also launched Honor Expert, a care planning service for seniors, and raised \$70 million Series E funding, bringing the company's valuation over \$1.25 billion.

All of that leaves Sternberg—who as CEO has set a goal of expanding the world's capacity to care for seniors—excited for what's to come. HomeCare talked with him about the latest trends

and his predictions for blending technology and hands-on care.

HEMOCARE: Look ahead to about five years from now. What will the homecare sector look like and what role will technology play? How will artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning fit in?

Sternberg: Within the next five years, the home care industry will see substantial consolidation, requiring homecare providers to scale to remain competitive and provide the best care for clients and job experience for care professionals. Technology, such as AI and machine learning, will play a major role in supporting this local scale and shaping the future of homecare as seniors overwhelmingly prefer to age in place.

Technology such as smart-home devices, phones and tablets, and wearable devices that assist with daily tasks will empower aging adults to take better care of themselves while AI and machine learning will help businesses provide better, more personalized experiences for

clients and care professionals. At Honor, we are at the forefront of high-tech meeting high-touch.

HEMOCARE: What technological opportunities are not being tapped in the senior market?

Sternberg: Personalization within technology needs to be utilized more in the senior care market. There are brands who are trying to do this but are getting it wrong since they tend to take a one-size-fits-all approach to engaging the senior market.

Because older adults are complex to target, companies can use this opportunity to leverage technology like AI and machine learning to account for each senior's individual preferences rather than a one-size-fits-all approach so they're meeting a wide range of preferences and expectations.

HEMOCARE: It's now been more than a year since Honor acquired Home Instead. What are some of the key lessons you have learned from the integration process?

Sternberg: One of the key lessons we learned since acquiring Home Instead is that we couldn't keep the two businesses separate. We realized we had to find a way to integrate both to ensure we were staying aligned with our strategy to provide the best homecare experience for our clients and provide a positive company culture for our employees and care professionals. When we weren't fully integrated, we realized that we were missing opportunities when it came to knowledge transfer between Honor and Home Instead, system-wide transformation on

the back end of how homecare is delivered and reduction of complexity around the number of teams we worked with. Once we fully integrated, we were able to reorganize our leadership into four divisions all focused on building the brand, driving growth, building technology and delivering care.

HOMECARE: Did you come away with any new thoughts about employee engagement and retention or how technology can help handle the staffing crisis?

Sternberg: On the care professional side, we've equipped our care professionals with technology, information and tools they need to properly care for clients while giving more transparency and choice to them to have visibility and control of their schedules, which has aided in employee retention. This has helped our care professionals find work that better matches their preferences by giving them opportunities that are more suitable to their skill set, such as matching care professionals who have experience working with dementia patients with said patients.

This approach to technology keeps our care professionals engaged as it provides them with the information and tools they need to properly care for clients through best-in-class homecare training and how to spot what actions are good and how to improve. We also realized that to create better and more engaged care professionals, we had to find fair and equitable ways to incentivize them to grow and learn. Our technology sets goals

for care professionals through performance management and provides them with a user-friendly interface where they can see how they're tracking towards goals such as timeliness, client consistency and call-offs.

HOMECARE: Has there been friction—either in the Home Instead integration or more broadly in the industry—in the transition from traditional to digital approaches to care? What do homecare operators need to do to maintain their human touch?

Sternberg: We've noticed that homecare and the senior care market are typically slower to digitize their processes compared to most industries. Historically, the homecare industry, and the health care industry in general, has been slower to invest in and adopt technology, especially if they're unsure if the technology will work.

The pandemic forced all industries to adapt to an even faster-changing market, but there still needs to be a human element to the technology we use. Homecare operators must be strategic about the technology they're utilizing and building, and the experiences they're creating with this technology if they want to enter and innovate in this field. For instance, before using any kind of technology, homecare operators need to ask themselves if the tech they want to integrate is actually solving their problems and if the tech focuses on the end user experience.

HOMECARE: On a personal note, you've tweeted about how



Honor CEO Seth Sternberg

running Honor has made you conscious of your own aging. How do you work to stay fresh, especially when it comes to technology?

Sternberg: On the technology front and keeping pace with change, I follow tech news pretty closely. I'd recommend techmeme.com to anyone wanting to get a broad sampling of the latest happenings. I then dive into new areas I find at a general level that I'm not yet familiar with.

But it's important to also talk about the human side. I exercise a lot, mostly aerobic and some strength training. If you want to delay the physical and mental effects of aging—exercise is key. **HC**

Hannah Wolfson is editor of HomeCare media.

Why Your Next Hire Should Be a Chatbot

10 ways digital tools can address workforce gaps & increase patient volume

By Krishna Kurapati

As we enter 2023, rising expenses, including wage growth, worker shortages, payment rate cuts and changing regulations in the pandemic affected world continue to overwhelm the home health industry's bottom line, and there's little relief as inflation continues to hold the nation hostage.

Contrary to these national problems, America's senior population is rapidly growing and most prefer to age in their own homes. At the same time, our health care workforce is shrinking. Finding a qualified person—professional caregivers, personal

care or home health aides, direct-care workers, certified nursing assistants and therapists—to provide in-home care for these patients is a Herculean task. Indeed, COVID-19 turned a spotlight on the ways older and vulnerable populations were left behind.

According to the Home Care Association of America's State of Home Care Industry at a Crossroads Report, many homecare agencies are addressing this shortage by boosting wages, benefits and incentives, including bonuses up to \$1,200. IBISWorld reports

wages paid in the home care subsector have increased to 57.5% of revenue in 2021, up from 50.7% in 2016.

From 2018 to 2028, the long-term care sector will need to fill 8.2 million job openings in direct care, including 1.3 million new jobs to meet rising demand, and 6.9 million openings caused by workers who transfer to other occupations or exit the labor force.

Amid the onerous costs associated with staff recruitment, retention and turnover, a home-based care leader must find creative solutions—but where to start?

One idea is to look to health care counterparts that are already finding great success in the virtual care landscape. Almost weekly, health care organizations of all sizes and types are in the headlines touting consumer and provider acceptance of the integral use of digitally enabled tools and remote process automation options like chatbots that can interact with patients, solve problems and spur actions. Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are helping bend the cost curve and preserve margins to sustain compliance and achieve business performance viability.

To help jump start your digital transformation, here are the top 10 use cases for AI-powered chatbot remote process automation to introduce to begin enhancing home healthcare.

1 Speed staff onboarding.
Automate the delivery of onboarding forms and

30%

One health care organization's adoption of chatbots realized reductions in intake time as high as 30%.

information quickly to new employees to complete required agency documentation. The quicker the team member is enrolled in your system, the faster you can start billing clients for their services.

2 Reduce patient intake time & hasten patient onboarding.

Medicare requires patient referrals be boarded within 48 hours. Speed up onboarding by sending a chatbot upon receipt of a referral to introduce patients to home health services and to confirm their willingness to receive services.

The chatbot can also complete administrative forms and auto-upload them to the office, which also speeds insurance processing.

One health care organization's adoption of chatbots realized reductions in intake time as high as 30%. With the average hourly cost of retaining a home health registered nurse in California, for example, ranging from \$34.24 to \$54.44, talent hires add up to real money fast.

3 Reduce administrative busy work.

Automatically confirm employee certifications and auto insurance to speed administrative tasks, reducing a manager's workload and avoiding the need for staff to come into the office. Simply scan and upload images of documents and avoid a trip to the office.

4 Automatically fill last-minute patient additions to the schedule.

This time-saving task will mitigate



multiple manager and staff calls, improving organization and productivity. This is especially important when the addition is a new referral.

5 Save wasted patient trips.

Automate outreach to patients to ensure they will be present and prepared for a planned on-site visit or have the opportunity to reschedule.

6 Integrate remote patient monitoring.

Supplement after-hours requests for in-person visits with virtual consults from the comfort of the patient's home to cut down on travel time and costs.

7 Reduce avoidable emergency department & hospital visits.

Offer on-demand virtual visits to evaluate the need for a home visit or a trip to a local emergency room.

8 Provide HIPAA-secure staff communication.

Avoid potential penalties and harm to your business reputation by providing secure texting options between employees.

9 Securely communicate with patients & caregivers.

Improve patient satisfaction and CAHPS scores by enhancing proactive communication

10 Enable discrete distress signaling.

Track and pinpoint a staff member's GPS location in emergencies or unsafe situations.

Empower your managers and care workers with digital-first strategies that promote and streamline human connection between caregivers and their patients, augment the staffing shortage, reduce unwarranted expenditures, and help people access care on their terms. Not only do chatbots, secure texting and virtual visits automate routine operational tasks, these tools yield big benefits that re-energize leadership and staff to spend quality time with patients. **HC**

Krishna Kurapati is the founder and CEO of QliqSOFT. He has more than two decades of technology entrepreneurship experience. Kurapati started QliqSOFT with the strong desire to solve clinical collaboration and workflow challenges using artificial intelligence-powered digital technologies across the U.S. health care system. He is actively involved in early-stage financing of startups in both the U.S. and India.

Sharing Your Back Office Can Help

What an RCM outsourcing vendor can do for you—& how to choose

By Hannah Wolfson

When is it time to outsource your billing and revenue cycle management (RCM)? For home medical equipment (HME) providers, that can be a big step, especially if budgets are tight. But companies like Prochant, which provides end-to-end and focused billing solutions for the HME and home infusion markets, can help bring in the money by taking over some of your back office operations—or even the entire revenue cycle. HomeCare asked Joey Graham, chief revenue officer at Prochant, to help explain why outsourcing RCM can make a difference.

HomeCare: As we dive into 2023, why should outsourcing RCM be on HME providers' to-do lists? What benefits can it bring to an organization?

Graham: As we look at 2023, we're facing some unprecedented challenges: record inflation, an increasingly difficult employment market, major supply chain disruptions, and the tail end of a global pandemic. Demand for HME is up, supply is waning and providers are backlogged.

Bench resources specifically are a luxury that most HME companies can't even imagine—they are under-staffed and over-worked.

Now more than ever, providers are looking for opportunities to reduce and/or contain labor costs while improving key RCM metrics like days sales outstanding (DSO), 90+ A/R balances—that is, the percentage of open outstanding accounts receivable balance that is at least 90 days past the date they became billable—and collections rates.

The trick is setting this up while simultaneously creating scalable RCM infrastructure that is able to handle increasing patient volumes. Accomplishing this is significantly easier if you partner with the right RCM outsourcing vendor. If managing patient orders and referral expectations is taking all of their attention, providers need a strong RCM partner they can turn to for front- and back-office management.

HomeCare: How can outsourcing RCM impact staffing and retention?

Graham: When you outsource a large portion of your RCM work, you shift the risk associated with attrition to that vendor. This

allows you to manage a smaller team. The RCM vendor in turn is better positioned to manage the attrition because they have a significantly larger RCM team, and the ability to fund bench resources who are available to step in quickly. Bench resources specifically are a luxury that most HME companies can't even imagine—they are under-staffed and over-worked, so having extra people available is simply out of reach. Will attrition go away? Absolutely not, but it will be better managed and disruptions will be minimized.

HomeCare: Do people worry that outsourcing will actually cause them more work, such as having to go back and produce documentation? Is that actually the case?

Graham: It depends—the reality is, you need that documentation. If you're not getting it up front and your process is that you won't bill without it (a business decision), someone's got to get it. It's all about your front-office and intake process. Your RCM partner can help you streamline intake, as well as take over portions of the process for you. Intake is a process that can be outsourced. Regardless, an RCM partner has seen what works and what does not and can let you know what other successful providers have done to address this.

HomeCare: Is outsourcing billing all or nothing? What options might there be for smaller companies that aren't ready or willing to give up some control?

Graham: While it depends on the specific RCM vendor you're evaluating, in general it can be done strategically, parsing out the right work to the right partner. For example, you may have a handful of payers you want to keep in-house. You may have a patient-pay vendor you work with who manages your patient payment portal, payment plans and statements. And you may have an RCM vendor focused on your insurance payers. The work can be parsed by payer, branch



or product line. For example, you may keep your high-end rehab in-house and leverage an RCM partner to work your respiratory and supply lines of business. We're extremely flexible and meet providers where they're comfortable. Around half of our growth comes from existing clients adding services; most companies start small and grow into an outsourcing relationship rather than going all in at once.

HomeCare: You've talked in the past about using key performance indicators (KPIs) to focus on problem areas and to keep tabs on how the business is going. What are some important KPIs HME organizations should be tracking?

Yes, we're very big on KPIs. Some of the most important to watch include:

- DSO
- 90+ A/R%
- Collections rate
- Write-off rate
- Denial rate
- Clean claim rate
- Open order days
- Hold days

It is recommended that all HME providers track these metrics monthly, following each month-end close. Create a KPI dashboard and trend them over time. Set goals and manage progress against them. If possible, drill down to identify payer, product and branch trends. Prochant has addressed this issue with our web-based RCM analytics platform, which is available to our clients at no additional cost.

HomeCare: How can an organization be sure that everything is secure?

Graham: Information security is a hot topic, with major data breaches occurring daily. In just the last couple of months, the following organizations have experienced major breaches: Twitter, Norton, Slack, LastPass, Uber, Medibank, Microsoft, American Airlines—the list goes on and on. These are multi-billion dollar enterprises that have invested significantly in data security.

This is an area where I feel providers need to look for outside help: help securing their own systems as well as only sharing data with vendors who can demonstrate they have the right policies and procedures in place. Anyone can say they're "HIPAA

certified." This doesn't mean anything. Look for partners who have a formal HIPAA certification. There are only a handful; the major ones are HITRUST and ISO 27001. This means they have gone through a formal certification process, similar to your accreditation procedures, to not only document but prove their compliance with stringent data security protocols.

Data security is a continuous process, and organizations with formal HIPAA certifications must invest heavily every year to maintain their certification and ensure they're keeping up with the evolution of technology and cyber threats. Prochant is proudly HITRUST certified. To date, we are the only RCM partner for HME that has achieved this certification. This is a major reason why some of the largest organizations in HME have turned to us for RCM support. **HC**

Hannah Wolfson is the editor for HomeCare media.

Reinvent Your Lame Voicemail

The trick to keep selling even when you're out of office

By Jim Mathis

My friend Mike is in sales for an international company. He makes phone calls to prospective clients every day to sell a magazine that helps his clients make more money. When they are not in, he leaves a great message that gets prospects to call him back.

Yet his own outgoing message used to be basic: "Hi, this is Mike. I am not in right now. Please wait for the beep and leave a short message. I will return your call shortly."

Yeah, that is pretty lame, and it sounds about the same as everybody else on the planet, too.

Last year, Mike decided to use a more proactive voicemail message, rather than the traditional one that so many people default to. It helped him differentiate himself to his prospects and customers.

If you want to stand out from every other sales account caller, you have to do something different. Since everyone else is just offering vanilla messages, you need to add flavor for the people who are calling you.

In a day when people can instantly tell you aren't in (they got your voicemail, so the secret is out) and they already know what to do after the beep (they have a beep of their own on their phone, and they all sound the same), Mike wanted to rise above the crowd.

So we reinvented his voicemail message—and his income.

He figured that he should offer value to the people calling him that no one else gives customers. He figured he should tell his clients something unique that might benefit them. He figured correctly.

Stop Telling People What They Know

The key is to stop telling people something they already know, and rather, to start telling them something they don't know about what you can do for them.

Mike changed his voice mail to say something along the lines of: "Hi, this is Mike. I'm helping a client make a lot of money right now. Leave your name, number and a brief message and I'll help you make money next!"

Wow, was it effective! His clients loved the message. Even other sales representatives in his company started calling just to hear it. And his sales improved.

Apparently, his customers, his clients and even his competition were watching him. They were listening, too. He almost always leads his company in sales closings and, more importantly, has positioned himself as a trendsetter in the typically conservative world of account executives. He regularly stands out from the competition.

To Do Right Now

What can you say in your outgoing voicemail about what you are doing now to help someone achieve their goals by doing business with you? Are you assisting someone to make a life-changing decision? Are you delivering a value that others would want for themselves?

What can you say you are doing for the last person who contacted you—and that you will do for the next person you speak with? That is the value of what you deliver in a nutshell.

It goes back to your so-called "airplane speech." I noticed that when I fly across the country, the people I sit next to will introduce themselves and say what they do for a living. I've learned how to explain what I do in less than 14 words. The shorter and simpler it is, the better others grasp what I do. I have also learned to state it in a way that makes them say, "How do you do that?" That leads to a conversation about the value I deliver.

If you know how to give a great airplane speech about what you do, then you can incorporate it into your voicemail message. Mike helps clients make a lot of money. So when he sits on airplanes and someone asks, "What do you do?" he answers, "I help people make a lot of money!"





“How do you do that?” is usually the next question. Then he explains the unique value that he delivers to customers.

Now incorporate that value into your voicemail message. In his case, he said directly, “I am helping a client make a lot of money.” In the home medical equipment field, you could say, I help people heal, age or live safely in their homes. If you help anyone accomplish a positive outcome in his or her daily life or business, then that is what you do for a living, and you should be doing it for your customers at all times—even when you are away from your desk doing something else.

“I help people accomplish their personal goals in life and business,” you could say.

Work on your airplane speech. Keep your statement short, simple and easy for anyone to understand. Use as few words as possible (anything less than 14 is a good number). Work on a script to reduce the words before you record it. Use shorter words. Communicate in a way that compels people to ask for more information about how you do what you do.

Try it out in several different scenarios and see how strangers react. Then try it out on potential customers. Don’t tell them all that you do; tell them just enough to make them ask for more.

Now you have the basis for a great conversation starter on an airplane, in an elevator or standing in line that you can turn into a terrific voicemail message that people will remember.

So, what benefit are you delivering right now? What are people doing with your product or service that goes on all the time? What are they taking away now that others would want to be using themselves?

Next Is Best

People love being first in line. But being first is nothing compared to being next. I would rather be next than first. If you think about it, next is an awesome position in which to be. Next is filled with anticipation. First is already there and the anticipation has waned. For instance, which holds more excitement for you, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day? Everyone loves what comes next.

If you can make customers or prospects feel they are next, they will anticipate a great experience with you. And they will enjoy the experience more each time they call you.

What are you doing for customers now that would make the next customer excited? I taught this to a group in Alaska several years ago. One woman took this message to

heart and reinvented her voicemail to say that she was “helping a client save a fortune, but I will be glad to help you make your fortune next.”

It worked, and her callbacks increased dramatically. It seems that people love the experience of feeling that they will get the royal treatment next. Whatever you can do to add value for the person calling your number, you should do right now, before the next person calls you and gets your lame message.

Your entire voicemail strategy should be about delivering value to people who call you. Deliver benefits they can get from only you, not lame features or facts.

I don’t put the day and date on my voice mail message for two reasons: First, most people didn’t call me to get the time and date. They used to have numbers to call for time and temperature. But with the advent of the Weather Channel and smartphones, most people know that already.

Secondly, most outgoing messages have the date someone is in and out wrong. I called someone and her message said she was out for the week, but she would “return on December 15.” Pretty smart message—except that I called her in July! When was the last time she updated that message? Is she aware how lame she sounds?

It wouldn’t hurt each person reading this to call their own voicemail, hear their message and ask themselves, “Would I leave a message?” and “Would this make me want to do more business with them?”

Try it out and see what you think when you hear what you say. **HC**

Jim Mathis, IPCS, CSP, is the chief of Reinvention Nation, an international Certified Speaking Professional and best-selling author of “Reinvention Made Easy: Change Your Strategy, Change Your Results.” To subscribe to his free personal and professional development newsletter, email subscribe@jimmathis.com with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject. An electronic copy will be sent out to you every month. For more information on how Mathis and his programs can benefit your organization or group, call (888) 688-0220 or visit jimmathis.com.

Doing the Work to Keep Seniors at Home

TruBlue's CEO on the company's fast-growing business model

By Hannah Wolfson

We all know it's hard to find a good handyman these days. What about someone focused on helping seniors keep their homes safe and maintained? That's what TruBlue Total House Care does.

The company does modifications for aging in place, although its primary focus is on a subscription model for routine services like maintenance, yard work, small repairs and other projects. This fall, TruBlue announced a strategic partnership with in-home care franchise Comfort Keepers to be their preferred provider of home modifications and handyman services.

HomeCare talked with TruBlue President Sean Fitzgerald about how providing handyman and other services fit into the future of aging in place, and how home medical equipment (HME) companies might find a willing partner in local TruBlue franchises. Fitzgerald, a franchise expert, has been vice president at BrightStar Senior Care and also spent time at FYZICAL Therapy & Balance Centers.

HOME CARE: Why take on handyman services after all the experience you have in senior care?

Fitzgerald: The senior care industry's done a great job taking care of the individual from a care perspective, but being at BrightStar, I realized that the home environment was a big challenge and there were not a lot of—if any—solutions out there. That's

where our passion comes from. I stumbled upon TruBlue about three years ago and said "I want to be involved in this." The thing about the senior space is that it's heavily driven by strategic alliances and referrals. So that's why we started looking at how we can work together with other companies to find a solution that's complementary to all. I just knew that we could help senior care companies help seniors stay in their homes longer, which we know is better for the senior. And in the senior care space, we knew that a big reason we lost clients is because of falls or a home environment the family felt was no longer suitable—so they'd move into a nursing home and then we would lose all that revenue. I saw that we could be the missing piece of the puzzle that can help create that peace of mind that families are looking for.

HOME CARE: So what's new about what TruBlue is doing?

Fitzgerald: We all know that seniors are getting on ladders and changing light bulbs and doing things around the home that they should not be doing. We want to handle those simple tasks from a safety perspective. It's not just keeping the home maintained, it's, "Let us move that chair to the other side of the room. Let us go to the shed and bring out your flower pots." It's the simple things.

Our model is essentially to create a subscription business where we can

come in on a regular basis and make sure these things are getting done. It's not just installing grab handles and leaving; we can come in and take care of things, including things most homeowners don't know about in terms of maintenance that needs to be done, such as changing air filters or checking the hot water heater... We do bathroom inserts and walk-out tubs, too, but that's not what most people can afford or necessarily need.

It's really the maintenance piece, which most homeowners don't really know needs to be done. We're not going in and redoing their kitchen, we're coming in and saying "the drawer's loose, let us fix it." Because if a senior doesn't have someone who can do it, they're going to attempt to do it themselves, and that's a major health hazard. When I look at our services in a big picture, I feel that we're a fall prevention service as much as any device that's out there.

HOME CARE: Is this part of a trend toward providing services as much to the families as to the seniors themselves?

Fitzgerald: Yes. I live in Cincinnati and my father lives in Pennsylvania, so I can't go change a light bulb for him. We all know that aging in place is just going to continually grow and explode, especially post-COVID. ... But if you look at the end of life for seniors today, the quality is not great. Because

what happens is that they try to age in place until the family realizes that they can't anymore and decides to put them in a nursing home, which is expensive. Either they turn over all their assets to the nursing home and then eventually that senior passes away and the family has nothing left, or, if they're fortunate enough that they don't have to turn over their home, the home gets neglected, and when the loved one passes away, the home has to practically be given away because it's so outdated or run down.

We want to help reverse that trend and say, No. 1, you don't have to put them in a nursing home. There are solutions. Let's educate people on how to age successfully at home. And then there's also a monetary aspect to maintaining the senior's assets. The way I would want to live out the remaining days of my life is in the home. I'm just excited about the fact that I feel that we can revolutionize the way that people age in this country.

HEMOCARE: So what does this mean for the company? Are you growing?

Fitzgerald: We've exploded the last two and a half years. When I came on board, we had about 20 locations. Now we have over 80 operating locations. And the exciting thing about it is the level and the experience and the type of franchisees that we have today in the system. We have a lot of franchise operators who come from the senior care space, whether they worked in information technology or they owned senior care companies and they're adding this as a complement. Obviously, it's a great business model and we can do really well financially, but it is a business with a purpose, and that's really cool. I think that's why everybody gets into senior care or health care—because at the end of the day, they really enjoy helping people, and we feel that we can be a major contributor to that.

HEMOCARE: From an HME provider's or an agency perspective, would they be more likely to partner with TruBlue

and give referrals? Or are they incorporating home maintenance into their menu of services?

Fitzgerald: Great question. Both! One of the things that we explain to our partners is that we want to pick up where they stop. So one of the things that we offer is a senior home safety assessment. I know the senior care companies do patient assessment, and part of that includes the home environment, but ours is much more extensive and is inside and outside the home, from a lifestyle, maintenance and safety perspective. And we can provide that to the homeowners. So some of the brands that we work with incorporate us into the onboarding process... It's just a value add for the company and the families and the seniors. Overall, if we can make sure the environment is safe and maintained, that's going to provide peace of mind to the family members, which should extend the senior's ability to age in place, which should then extend the ongoing business for those senior care companies. That's where we feel like a real value add is—that if we can take someone whose average client or customer is there for six years, and if we can prevent them from going in a nursing home and extend that to 10 to 12 years, we just doubled their business.

HEMOCARE: Who is the target market for this? We talk a lot about whether care in the home is affordable to the broad population.

Fitzgerald: Our initial strategy is for us to partner with senior care companies because their customers are primarily private pay, and so they're already conditioned and budgeted for this. We're extremely inexpensive compared to a nursing home; it's not a significant cost to add our program on. We're beginning to see how Medicare Advantage is now covering a lot of modifications and we have partnered with the Helper Bees and Health Align, and now we're providing services to all demographics. That's where our owners can go in and do grab handles or handheld showers or raise



Sean Fitzgerald, TruBlue's CEO

toilet seats, because that's covered under Medicare Advantage.

HEMOCARE: What about durable medical equipment (DME) providers—is this an area you're looking to partner with?

Fitzgerald: Our ultimate goal is the subscription and maintenance piece of the business. We do senior modifications as part of that, but that doesn't mean we want to be a senior modification company. We would work in a complementary way with the DMEs, where if they're going to be the one that does the walkout tub, that's fine, but if their client's porch is falling down or light fixtures need to be taken care of, we can help. What matters is that there's someone that they can trust to send in. We can also then become a cross-referral opportunity, because what we notice is that especially with seniors, once we establish a relationship with him, they call us for everything. I even had a franchisee tell me he had someone call and ask where to get their car fixed. That's the cool thing about it. **HC**

Hannah Wolfson is the editor for HomeCare media.

FALL PREVENTION

Making Safety a Serious Habit

5 key steps to protect seniors from dangerous falls

By Dr. Mark Steffen

For seniors living independently at home, falling poses a significant threat to health and well-being. In fact, falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults in the United States, according to the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Results from a fall can range from minor pain to health emergencies, with one in five falls resulting in serious injuries like broken bones or head trauma.

Against the backdrop of these startling statistics is another troubling truth: Too many seniors are not taking steps to mitigate the risk of falling in their homes. A recent survey of Minnesota residents 65 years of age and older revealed that over two-thirds (71%) were not concerned at all about falling and one-third (38%) had failed to take any safety measures to fall-proof their homes.

This data reveals broader truths common to seniors across the country. Many simply don't appreciate the implications that a fall can have on physical and psychological well-being. Seniors who fall and sustain an injury may never fully recover to their previous level of health and wellness. That's why it is so vital to have educational conversations with older adults and their loved ones about the risk of falls.

A senior's first fall also can lead to a fear of falling—which becomes a risk factor itself if it prompts detrimental changes in behavior. After a fall, older adults may start restricting their activities or avoiding leaving home, thinking it will keep them safer. However, this type of premature immobility can lead to other negative outcomes, such as social isolation, declines in mental health or the need for additional medications.

5 Key Steps for Fall Prevention

The consequences of a fall are real, but the good news is that most falls are preventable, especially when seniors, their loved ones, and their caregivers work together to improve mobility and safety. Following

A CHECKLIST TO SHARE WITH CLIENTS

STAIRS & STEPS

- Are there papers, shoes, books or other objects on the stairs?
✓ Always keep objects off of stairs.
- Are some steps broken or uneven?
✓ Have an electrician put in an overhead light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Has a stairway light bulb burned out?
✓ Have someone change the bulb.
- Are the handrails loose or broken?
✓ Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.
- Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?
✓ Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.

KITCHEN

- Are often used things on high shelves?
✓ Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high).
- Is your step stool sturdy?
✓ If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

BATHROOMS

- Is the tub or shower floor slippery?
✓ Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Do you need support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet?
✓ Have grab bars put in next to and inside the tub and next to the toilet.

FLOORS

- When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?
✓ Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.
- Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords?
✓ Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If needed, have an electrician put in another outlet.
- Are there papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the floor?
✓ Pick up things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.
- Do you have throw rugs on the floor?
✓ Remove the rugs, or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.

BEDROOMS

- Is the light near the bed hard to reach?
✓ Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.
- Is the path from the bedroom to the bathroom dark?
✓ Put in a nightlight so you can see where you're walking. Some nightlights go on by themselves after dark.



are some specific, proactive steps that you can take to support seniors and their families.

1 Get the conversation started.

As people age, it's important to have open and honest discussions about health and wellbeing. Everyone wants to be heard and to feel seen. Here are some tips for home health staff to address the risks of falling—and the need to act—in a way that facilitates productive discussions.

- Prepare for the conversation by anticipating potential questions.
- Stay patient and positive, reinforcing that this is a common conversation millions of people across the nation are having (or should be).
- Avoid sounding judgmental or skeptical, and don't assign blame.
- Affirm that it's okay to feel nervous or anxious, and that taking action is a good way to alleviate those feelings.
- Establish yourself as a trusted person seniors can talk to and count on for help.
- Encourage them to talk with their doctor about fall risks and prevention, including any concerns they may have and how the medicines they take may impact their risk.

Keeping the focus on reducing fall risks as a means to help seniors continue to live independently helps build trust and the CDC has great resources that can help inform these discussions, as well as materials that can be given to individuals and families.

2 Secure the highest-risk areas of the home.

Falls can happen anywhere in the home, but bathrooms and staircases are particularly important to reinforce with safety

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features. In the bathroom, it's a good idea to have a safety rail by the toilet as well as grab bars and nonslip mats in the shower. Some seniors may also want a hand-held shower spray to use while sitting. For older adults with Medicare or another insurance plan, it's worth checking to see if they have a home safety benefit that will help cover the cost of purchasing and installing such features. Local community or religious organizations may also be able to help.

Any stairs in the home should have handrails on both sides, and home health

staff should encourage seniors to use the handrails consistently, even if they think it's unnecessary. Establishing safe habits early can help protect older adults over time.

3 Walk through the home together.

While some areas of the home stick out as potential trouble spots, there likely are hazards seniors see every day and overlook. Going through the home with them can help identify issues to address. First, the home should have clear pathways that provide enough room to maneuver safely, alone or

with any ambulatory devices like canes or walkers. Loose rugs that could cause tripping should be removed. Lighting should be bright enough to see clearly, and burned-out bulbs should be replaced promptly. For more ideas, home health staff can share the CDC checklist for home safety with seniors and their families.

4 Consider footwear choices.

Staying mobile and independent starts with the feet, and the right footwear makes a critical difference. Experts recommend shoes that offer good support, low heels, and a back. Slip-ons, while undoubtedly comfortable, are very unstable and prone to sliding on smooth surfaces.

Even at home, older adults should wear supportive, comfortable shoes rather than walking around in their bare feet, socks, or slippers, all of which increase the risk of falls. This doesn't mean they have to wear excessively stiff, heavily cushioned shoes, however. The American Podiatric Medical Association recommends shoes with toe flexibility that allows natural foot motion

38%

of seniors in a Minnesota study had taken no fall precautions at home

Many simply don't appreciate the implications that a fall can have on physical and psychological well-being. Seniors who fall and sustain an injury may never fully recover to their previous level of health and wellness.

and heels that are stiff enough to provide support. Any seniors who aren't sure what their best footwear options would be can ask their primary care physician.

5 Explore activities to help build strength, balance & flexibility.

As seniors become progressively physically weaker with age, a commitment to staying strong is vital. The idea of exercising or stretching may sound daunting to some, but there are a range of options within reach of most. For example, simply standing up without using the hands is one simple exercise that strengthens leg muscles. Even if seniors can't stand up all the way, they can push up a couple of inches and sit back down once they feel some tension. Even that small range of motion helps tremendously by strengthening the legs, hips and core.

Seniors who enjoy exercising in groups may want to look into yoga or tai chi classes to help improve balance and flexibility. There are many balance exercises and simple stretches that can be done at home as well. For more guidance, a primary care physician also can refer older adults to a physical therapist who can teach them an exercise routine designed for their needs.

As the population of seniors continues to grow in the U.S., older adults will need support to age at home safely, preventing falls and avoiding unnecessary hospitalization. Home health staff can play a vital role in communicating with seniors and helping them secure the safeguards that will protect their health and well-being. **HC**

As senior vice president of medical management and chief medical officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Mark Steffen, MD, MPH, oversees medical and care management strategies for the company's 2.5 million members. Visit bluecrossmn.com.



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Making Use of a Valuable Tool

What to know if you are still choosing a software option for electronic visit verification

By Aboli Kakade

There are many difficulties that home health care companies must overcome, including allegations of fraud and the coordination of patient care. Although they have to deal with difficult scheduling and field management issues, their profit margins are extremely narrow.

Fortunately, there has been a direct and positive impact on an organization's ability to deliver high-quality treatment while increasing profits thanks to the use of electronic visit verification (EVV).

When it comes to improving the speed and effectiveness of care given in the comfort of one's own home, EVV has been shown to be an invaluable tool for both patients and medical facilities. It can improve the patient experience by reducing handling time and improving the quality of care delivered by clinical teams, while also replacing paper visits and eliminating the need for in-home visits and providing immediate communication with family members.

EVV software vendors help businesses not only overcome the difficult logistical obstacles of managing carers, but also increase profits.

EVV aids in the prevention of false claims for medical services, informs businesses of their staff members' in-home activities, and enables organizations of varying sizes to provide quality services to their clients.

By automating more of these field operations, most EVV software vendors help businesses not only overcome the difficult logistical obstacles of managing carers, but also increase profits and ensure they are in full compliance with all relevant regulations.

Increased patient demand for health care delivered at home makes EVV an urgent necessity. Yet it is not always easy to incorporate new methods and tools. In this article, we'll address some of the most common issues brought up during the switch to EVVs and provide some advice on how to move forward with confidence.

A New Mandate

Starting at the beginning of this year, states must now require home health care service providers making house calls to use

EVV. Information that is mandatory for all systems to gather and verify electronically is outlined in the law.

For home health care providers, electronic visit verification is a tool that can help keep tabs on where visits have been made, how much work has been done, how many hours have been logged and any other relevant data on the patient and caregiver relationship.

In essence, electronic verification is required whenever a patient receives care in the home. This makes it possible to confirm the nature of the service rendered, the time and place it was rendered, who performed the service and who received it.

How EVV Systems Function

Service providers must use an EVV solution that has been approved by the state they operate in to be electronic visit verification compliant. In general, this kind of program requires a system that can electronically verify data such as the services delivered, the person who received the services and other similar details.

This is typically done using a telephone or a web-based device. EVV for home health is predicated on cutting-edge technology, including GPS-based tracking software and computer software. The technology underlying EVV in home health enables organizations to monitor the whereabouts of their mobile teams, calculate remuneration,



data. While GPS is not mandated by any jurisdiction, its use is increasingly popular—but it can make caregivers uneasy to feel that their every move is being monitored. Employees and patients alike are concerned about the security of their personal information being compromised when they are required to enter identification information such as social security numbers.

Insufficient education is the root of many privacy concerns. The best solution is to try to respond to any and all questions your staff may have regarding data usage by outlining its necessity and highlighting the lack of viable alternatives. If you can, be creative within your chosen system in terms of how you go about verifying visits.

Benefits of EVV Automation for Service Providers

When it comes to new technology and developments, homecare is a sector that is constantly on the move. As a home health care business owner, you may be asking how you can take advantage of this expansion by using cutting-edge tools to better serve your customers.

Delivering high-quality treatment to patients at home is generally left to the discretion of caregivers and unmonitored, making it one of the industry's most frequently missed steps.

An EVV system automates the time and attendance of caregivers and provides a paperless, digital way of recording the type of care and services provided to the client, all in accordance with the care plan. EVV doesn't just protect health care providers—it also safeguards patients. **HC**

Aboli Kakade is a digital marketing executive for Automation Edge. She is interested in everything related to artificial intelligence and automation and is passionate about writing on the latest technology in health care and homecare. She contributes to many websites where she shares her experience and helps organizations make their name. Visit automationedge.com.

improve service quality and streamline their operations.

GPS is used by the majority of EVV solutions to confirm the physical address where service is being delivered. For instance, one approach logs the provider's physical position at the beginning and end of each visit. Typically, caretakers will be required to use an app on their phone or a dedicated device in the client's house to keep track of their visits.

Why It's Necessary

The use of new technology and innovations in health care is growing enormously. Homecare business owners need to understand how they can use modern technology to improve their client interactions and capitalize on this development.

The provision of high-quality care to customers is hard to document in home health care enterprises since it is frequently left to the discretion of individual caregivers and goes unreported. An EVV system offers an automated, paperless way to document the kind of care and services delivered to the client, in addition to providing verification of the visits as specified in the care plan.

The EVV system's automation may also assist in scheduling visits in accordance with the caregiver's schedule and location, which can help solve field operating problems. Through dynamic workflows, EVV software also assures the safety of caregivers along with that of patients.

Difficulties With Technology & Administration

Employees and patients alike are put under unnecessary strain when there are problems with data capture and login, inaccurate time records, broken devices, insufficient Wi-Fi and other technical issues. The consumer's permitted hourly amount could be exceeded if the system breaks down and records the time inconsistently, leading to overbilling.

What can you do about it? Make tech support a top priority and ensure consumers can get in touch with you via many methods, such as email and live chat. Make sure all problems are addressed and that caregivers have options. Make it easy for users to repair their mistakes by giving them quick access to a reliable tool.

Despite the fact that EVV systems must meet HIPAA privacy and security standards, there are still some worries about protecting

SCOOTERS & POWER CHAIRS

In this directory, HomeCare delivers a monthly breakdown of our annual Buyer's Guide, providing the most up-to-date information on the products and services your business needs. This month, we're covering scooters and power chairs. Here and on homecaremag.com/buyers-guide, you can find the essentials to help your business thrive. **HC**

HOME MEDICAL EQUIPMENT PROVIDERS

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Afikim Electric Vehicles
Kibbutz Afikim, Israel
(844) 313-7116
afiscosoters.com

Amigo Mobility International
Bridgeport, MI
(800) 692-6446
myamigo.com

Drive DeVilbiss Healthcare
Port Washington, NY
(877) 224-0946
drivemedical.com

EWheels
Phoenix, AZ
(888) 305-0881
ewheelsdealers.com

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freeriderusa.com

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(800) 624-6374
goldentech.com

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Fort Myers, FL
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meritsusa.com

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Exeter, PA
(800) 800-8586
pridemobility.com

Shoprider
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(800) 743-0772
shoprider.com

Solax Mobility
San Jose, CA
(800) 983-1306
solaxmobility.com

Stars N Stripes Scooters
Beverly Hills, CA
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snsscoters.com

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Invacare Corporation
Elyria, OH
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invacare.com

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MeritsUSA.com

Permobil
Lebanon, TN
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permobil.com

Pride Mobility Products Corporation
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pridemobility.com

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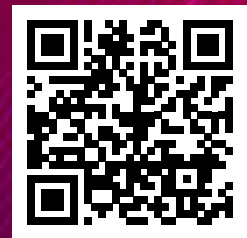
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Founder & Principal
Innovative Healthcare IT



David Morrison
HR Operations Manager
Universal Home Care



Steve Vlok
CEO & Founder
Celo



Hannah Wolfson
Editor
HomeCare

More than 95% of health care workers use mobile devices in and out of their working lives. Could your staff be letting private health information slip through the cracks? Hear from specialists and peers about the risks consumer apps and texting pose to your business, what it takes to be HIPAA-compliant in routine messaging—and how effective communication tools not only protect your organization but can also help increase efficiency, improve care coordination and keep staff happy.

In this discussion, we'll dive into:

- Information beyond the basics of HIPAA compliance in the homecare setting
- The importance of and different types of communication
- How texting, instant messaging and other commonly used apps put your organization at risk
- The challenges and benefits of implementing a HIPAA-compliant messaging system

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ACCREDITATION

1



1 ACHC

ACHC

The Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) has 35 years of experience promoting safe, quality patient care. As a national accreditor, ACHC is trusted for providing value, integrity and the industry's best customer service. ACHC offers a comprehensive range of accreditation and certification options across the continuum of care.

achc.org

2



Accreditation Organization

2 Patient-Centered Respiratory Home Accreditation

THE COMPLIANCE TEAM, INC.

The Compliance Team's exclusive Patient-Centered Respiratory Home (PCRH) program includes concise measures and daily operating protocols that promote better care planning, provider coordination and communications between respiratory specialists and prescribers. For the respiratory specialist, PCRH is a "must-have" accreditation. It is the first accreditation program designed specifically to help clinical respiratory home medical equipment providers perform at the top of their license.

thecomplianceteam.org/patient-centered-respiratory-home

3 Accreditation, Certification & Education

CHAP, INC.

CHAP provides the training, certification and accreditation you'll need to deliver the highest quality care. Accreditation provides the standards you need. Education and certification programs help ensure your standards are delivered day after day. CHAP's patient-centered, partner-focused philosophy completely changes the dynamic of accreditation and creates an environment of learning and improvement. They measure their success by giving you an experience that enables you to achieve the desired and expected outcome. Clinical quality, operational effectiveness and growth for their partners guides every decision they make about serving you.

chapinc.org

3



NEW ON THE MARKET

Hand-picked by the editors of HomeCare & our team of industry experts, these products are the newest frontrunners shaping the homecare marketplace. Stay tuned in every issue for more industry-leading solutions.

1 Clarity ClearWord

SNAPFÖN

The Clarity ClearWord allows users to read with captioning software and hear their phone calls at a 50dB amplification. These features are made to assist users with hearing loss. Combining the Galaxy A03s by Samsung, the Clarity XLGgo Amplified Headset and a monthly Snapfön service plan is a savings bundle deal only available through Snapfön. The Galaxy A03s by Samsung features a 6.5-inch high definition LCD screen, a triple-lens camera, long-lasting battery, 32GB of internal memory with optional expandable storage and more. The Clarity amplified headset has tone control, is hearing aid compatible and is perfect for home or travel.

snapfon.com/phones/clarity-clearword



2 Adaptive Leakproof Underwear

SLICK CHICKS

Slick Chicks' leakproof underwear features a high-waisted and low-leg fit to provide the most coverage and comfort throughout the day. The side-fastening Velcro strip is designed for seated dressing and for those with hand dexterity challenges, while the Full UI Tech Liner helps to conquer stress and urge incontinence. Light to medium absorption. Made of 78% nylon and 28% elastane.

slickchicksonline.com



3 X-PLOR Portable Oxygen Concentrator

BELLUSCURA

Lightweight and compact at just 3.75lbs, the X-PLOR is ideal for patients who want to replace their heavy oxygen tanks. The X-PLOR is an Airronomically designed unit that delivers more oxygen per pound than other units in its class. It features four pulse settings delivering 215-750 milliliters per minute, including X-PLORation Mode, which delivers an extra boost of oxygen when you need it most. The X-PLOR is also Bluetooth-capable and can be connected to your mobile device through the company's Nomad Health App. With a user-replaceable cartridge, rechargeable battery, easy-to-use interface and high oxygen output, supplementary oxygen has never been more approachable or affordable.

xploroxygen.com



4 Laveo Toilet With Comfort Lift Package

WATERLESS TOILETS

The Laveo Dry Flush waterless portable toilet with Comfort Lift Package is an innovative, practical way to provide bedside toileting with dignity. The odorless, chemical-free, no-freeze, low-maintenance and compact toilet meets ADA standards, measures 16 inches wide by 20 inches deep by 20.5 inches high, and weighs 29 pounds. When done, users simply push the flush button. Instead of requiring water, plumbing or chemicals, the dispenser creates a new hygienic bowl. Each cartridge can handle an average of 15 flushes, or 25 uses if using optional Pee Powder. Once full, a cartridge may be discarded in a trash container; there is no dirty water to dump or chemicals to pour. Installing a new cartridge takes less than one minute. The Laveo runs on household power or a self-contained battery.

dry-flush.com



CPAP

1 AirSense 11

RESMED

In addition to ResMed's proprietary therapy algorithms and remote and self-monitoring capabilities, AirSense 11's new features include: Personal Therapy Assistant's interactive step-by-step tutorials via the myAir app for patients to set up their device and acclimate to therapy pressure; Care Check-In's tailored guidance through key milestones in their treatment journey, available in the myAir app and on the device screen itself; a sleek design, touch screen and intuitive menu that mimic a smartphone; and the ability to make over-the-air upgrades directly to a user's device. HCPCS code: E0601

resmed.com

1



2 Sol Full Face CPAP Mask

SUNSET HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS

Sunset Healthcare Solutions introduces the new Sol Full Face CPAP Mask. Sol is a premium mask without the premium price tag. Its easy pop cushions attach or detach from mask without the need to painstakingly align the pieces. A honeycomb vent reduces intensity for a gentle, quiet flow. A quick release connector provides convenience and freedom. Maximize reimbursement without sacrificing quality or compliance and help patients wake up to a brighter day with Sol.

sunsethcs.com

2



3 CPAP Pillow

CORE PRODUCTS INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Designed by a CPAP user for CPAP users, the Core CPAP Pillow provides comfort and compliance for CPAP users by helping prevent pressure point soreness and mask leaks for a restful night's sleep. The unique shape and quilted side panels create a distinct edge, allowing the mask and hose to comfortably hang over the side of the pillow. This helps prevent mask/pillow interference and keeps the CPAP mask from moving or placing excessive pressure on the face. The resilient fiber fill supports the head, while the crescent-shaped cutout contours the shoulder for a restful night's sleep. The CPAP Pillow is firm enough to support the head without losing its edge, yet comfortable enough to sleep on all night.

coreproducts.com

3





4

4 LiViliti Paptizer

LIVILITI HEALTH PRODUCTS

The LiViliti Paptizer UVC LED Smart Sanitizer uses Ultraviolet-C LEDs to eliminate over 99% of bacteria in just three minutes. The Paptizer is ozone and mercury free and has a two-year warranty. Bring safe, simple sanitization into the home with the LiViliti Paptizer.

liviliti.com



5

5 F&P Evora Full

FISHER & PAYKEL HEALTHCARE

Introducing F&P Evora Full, Fisher & Paykel Healthcare's new compact full-face mask for the delivery of CPAP therapy to treat obstructive sleep apnea. Evora Full delivers full performance with minimal contact. Evora Full features the next generation of Dynamic Support Technology, where the floating seal is supported by Stability Wings. These technologies work together to allow freedom of movement while keeping the mask comfortably in place. The Stability Wings provide structural support, enabling the floating seal to be more flexible and comfortable.

Evora Full sits under the nose for a clear line of sight. HCPCS codes: A7030, A7035

fphcare.com/us/evorafull



6

6 CPAPtabs

CPAPHERO

Cpaphero CPAPtabs are a brand-new product designed to give you months of daily cleaning for mask cushions. Simply place your cushions in a glass of warm water, drop in a tablet, watch the water bubble and change color, and in less than five minutes, your cushions are gently cleansed and grime and debris are reduced. Works with all cushions for CPAP masks with directions to submerge in water to clean.

cpaphero.com

ADJUSTABLE BEDS



1 MED-MIZER INC.

ActiveCare Bed

Getting in and out of bed doesn't have to be a challenge. With the ActiveCare Bed and its automated SafeTurn, it is easy to reposition, stand up and get out. This rotational medical bed is intended to enhance comfort, mobility, independence and safety for individuals struggling to get in and out of bed. Standard options include fully adjustable bed (head/knee), built-in stand assist (high/low), and a powered recliner with optional features like premium aesthetics, a night light, hidden casters and two widths (36 inches and 42 inches) make the ActiveCare a solid choice for the home.

med-mizer.com



2 Power Rotor Assist Bed

GREAT LIFE HEALTHCARE

Great Life Healthcare's Powered Rotor Assist Bed can return dignity and independence to clients aging at home. This bed combines a conventional powered head and foot sections with a power rotation of the main surface to allow easy exit and entrance for patients. In the entry/exit position, the bed lowers the foot section similar to a lift chair. The mattress is a blend of foam and honeycomb gel to provide extra comfort and skin protection in the sacral area and shoulders.

greatlifehealthcare.com



3 Kalmia Perfect Height Bed

PARKS HEALTH PRODUCTS

Meet the Kalmia Perfect Height Bed System. This bed features high-low technology that allows patients and caregivers to raise and lower it a full 10 inches to make getting in and out easy. It has all the adjustable features customers need: head and foot elevation, zero gravity to reduce muscle pain, sleep apnea relief and massage—all in an easy-to-use remote. Available in multiple sizes, the Perfect Height bed looks just like any premium bed on the market.

parkshealthproducts.com



4 Hi-Low Adjustable Bed

ASSURED COMFORT

Assured Comfort Hi-Low Adjustable Beds promote wellness and provide comfort for those watching TV, reading or recovering. The high-low feature allows the bed surface to be raised for therapist convenience or for easier transfers in and out of bed. Choose from three models in twin, full, queen and split king sizes, and three premium mattresses. Beds feature quiet remote-control operation. Assured Comfort high-low foundations can typically retrofit an existing bed frame, or choose from an extensive line of headboards and footboards.

assuredcomfortbed.com



5 Hi-Low Adjustable Bed

FLEXABED

This luxury alternative to hospital beds is ideal for those in home health care or assisted living environments. The whisper-quiet base can lower the mattress on top as low as 16.5 inches off the ground with just a touch of a button. The Hi-Low is freestanding and only requires a single inch from the wall to operate. Soft, medium or firm mattress constructions are available in various sizes and materials. The sleeper can stay next to their loved one with the split king option. Optional add-ons are available, including side rails, dual-timed massage and more.

flexabed.com/adjustable_beds/luxury-alternative-to-hospital-beds-for-home



6 Supernal Hi-Low Bed

TRANSFER MASTER

The Supernal Hi-Low combines the comfort and aesthetics of a residential adjustable bed with the functionality and features of a medical bed. It lowers for easy transfers and raises for pain-free caregiving and to help users stand up. The Supernal Hi-Low can be adjusted from head to toe and put in a fully reclined position. Many features—from variable massage to the backlit wireless hand control—come standard with the Supernal Hi-Low. It's the perfect bed for users who want comfort and functionality at an affordable price.

transfermaster.com

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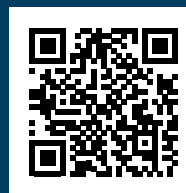
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- 19 Sales/Marketing Rep, Mgr, Dir
- 20 Other (Please Specify) _____

2. What is your primary type of business? (Check only one)

- 01 Home Medical Equipment Provider
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- 03 Independent Pharmacy/Chain Drugstore
- 15 Hospital with Home Health Agency
- 05 Home Health Agency/Nursing (Medical)
- 16 Hospice Agency
- 12 Personal Care/Home Care Services (Non-Medical)
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AWARD SEASON

Hard Work Rewarded

Binson's VP Sherry Krug named HME Woman of the Year

By Hannah Wolfson

Sherry Krug isn't afraid of hard work.

In fact, in more than a dozen years in the home medical equipment industry—including stints as a provider to a successful accountable care organization, work establishing a home medical equipment (HME) supplier for the country's largest house call practice, and now as vice president of business development for Binson's Medical Equipment & Sales—she's always been willing to put the time in.

"I feel like it's an industry that if you work hard and you show your adaptability and drive you can climb the ladder quickly, and maybe easier than you could if you were in another health care field," Krug told Medtrade Monday.

Her work has paid off; Binson was recently named the 2022 HME Woman of the Year, an award given by VGM and Associates annually to honor a woman in the field who



has made significant contributions to her company, her community and the HME industry. This was the seventh year the award was given.

"Sherry serves as a role model for women currently in the industry and sets a standard for generations to come," VGM Group Inc. CEO Mike Mallaro said in the virtual award ceremony. "I'm thrilled to see what she will accomplish next in the industry."

Krug was praised for her effectiveness as an industry leader and her ability to achieve results, as well as her expertise in HME operations, especially respiratory and COPD programs.

"The company's growth and development

are supported by her ability to lead teams through complex projects with a focus on quality, compliance, and cost savings," a release announcing her win said.

Krug, for one, said she feels good not just about the award but also about the future of the industry.

"I think we really legitimized our place in the continuum of care during COVID. We were the No. 1 oxygen supplier in southeast Michigan and we worked with a lot of our hospital systems to help them free up hospital beds, getting the oxygen and having it in the hospital and ready to go," she said. "With the aging population and all of our health care moving toward an at-home model, and trying to keep them at home longer, it works to our strengths. You can't do that without equipment. I have had personal experiences with caring for dying family members at home with hospice. Durable medical equipment is a critical component to making it all work. I'm very optimistic that we will continue to solidify our place in the health care continuum." **HC**

Hannah Wolfson is editor of HomeCare media.

We sell products, but durable medical equipment companies are nothing without the service we provide. I don't think we are fairly reimbursed for that service, but the patient education part of it keeps people home and keeps them from readmitting to the hospital. It's better for the overall health care system.

HOME CARE TECH

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Vin Gupta, MD

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