

Home Care Connects with Technology

Home care, like the rest of the medical community, has taken great strides over the past decade through the use of technology. Home care is now able to provide a number of services that were previously only available at a hospital. Home care has also used technology advances to improve communication, management and outcomes.

ADVANCED HOME CARE SERVICES

In addition to the standard nursing, therapy and aide services available from all home care agencies, most agencies now provide some or all of the following: Advanced Wound Care, AIDS/HIV Care, Asthma Care, Cardiac Rehabilitation, Diabetes Education, Home Tele-medicine, IV Therapy, Mental Health, Oncology Care, Pediatric Care, Obstetrics and more.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS

Thanks to recent technology, home care staff can now take advantage of:

- Beepers and cell phones that keep staff in touch 24 hours/day-365 days/year
- Palm/handheld CE devices/laptops for Point of Care (POC) service. POC eliminates the need for a paper chart and eventually storage of that chart. POC devices allow staff to download their schedules, visit notes, mileage records and other activities.
- Digital cameras allow wound care nurses to take photos of wounds. These photos are emailed to physicians and wound care specialists for consultation.

BENCHMARKING

With improvements in data collection and management, there is more opportunity for agencies to benchmark against national outcomes and determine how care can improve. For example, an agency recognizes the need to improve outcomes for patients with wounds. By comparing their data against national data, the agency is able to develop a plan for improvement. When the next set of benchmarking data is available, the agency is able to determine if the changes have improved their care outcomes.

HOME TELEMEDICINE

Telemedicine allows home care staff to collect indicators such as temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen saturation, lung function, etc., in less than 5 minutes.

Telemedicine benefits home care agencies by:

- Increasing the number of patients they can serve
- Increasing the amount of quality time with patients
- Improving ability to monitor patients
- Improving clinical and financial outcomes

Telemedicine benefits home care patients by:

- Monitoring their status daily
- Maintaining consistent contact with the home care agency
- Allowing earlier intervention

For more information about this newsletter or home care, please contact the CAHC office.

Paperwork Reduction

A constant goal for everyone in healthcare is the reduction of paperwork. Because of the many and varied payors, government agencies, and providers involved in health care, the swell of paperwork has become burdensome to all.

Improved information systems and web-based technology make the dream of a paperless office possible.

Home care agencies now employ point of care (POC) technology which will eliminate the need for a paper chart. The POC systems allow agencies to automatically generate paperwork necessary for care approval and payment.

The industry is hopeful that much of this paperwork will soon become electronic. Less paper means more time with patients thus, improving staff satisfaction, patient satisfaction, and improving the quality, consistency and outcome of care.