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Minding the communication gap: Secure texting enables faster clinical data sharing

Every day, senior care providers and facility operators grapple with communication gaps that can impede the flow of health information and interrupt or delay care delivery, especially during resident transfers and health emergencies.

But a new solution to this complex problem may be right at their fingertips, according to one senior healthcare provider.

The integration of secure data platforms and everyday text messaging can make an outcome-changing difference in a resident's healthcare experience, says Curana Health, a clinical care provider for senior care and living communities. The company is currently test-

ing a platform that gives clinical teams the ability to bridge communication gaps using their mobile devices, explained Chief Information Officer Todd Tyler.

Curana's new texting platform, called LINC, or Live Information Network Connection, is being piloted in facilities across three states this fall, speeding the secure flow of protected health information among Curana clinicians.

The next step will be to extend LINC texting capabilities to additional partner facilities, allowing the communication of real-time intelligence across teams and further supporting the coordination of care across various clinical settings, Tyler said.

LINC is designed to reduce the steps in the patient-care journey, providing real-time and actionable intelligence quickly (including instant text notification when residents are transferred to and from acute-care settings). It ensures that providers and case management teams can communicate via text in a secure, protected platform — and that teams are fully informed to take the next steps in care.

Networking vendors

To make this possible, the company has partnered with best-in-class, experienced and certified vendors that work together to support LINC's instant communication and data gathering capabilities, Tyler said. Their solutions include a secure texting platform, which specializes in securely transmitting HIPAA-protected information, a real-time intelligence platform and an electronic health record software. With a mobile device in hand, clinicians will use LINC to share information that supports the tasking workflow within the electronic health record, tying clinical action to a single patient and allowing teams to track those actions to ensure optimal care delivery.

Clinicians and care teams can use the LINC platform to participate in Curana-designed workflows that promote efficiency and precision, Tyler explained. With all the necessary data connected and real-time text notifications, administrative burden is reduced, he added. LINC's analytics also will

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support detailed oversight, showing when a message was sent, when it was read, time to action and what the next steps are. It also includes an escalation process to ensure that nothing is missed along the way.

Quick, secure access to health data and documentation is vital to successful clinical intervention and good outcomes, Tyler said.

"You're going from traditional methods of communication, such as fax, phone call or manila envelope, to something that is streamlined and in real time, using high-quality, actionable data," he observed.

The need for better data

For senior care clinicians, the LINC platform is a simple, intuitive route to the better and faster data access they are seeking, said Paula Requeijo, MD, CMD, Chief Medical Officer at Curana.

"As our industry continues this journey from fee-for-service to quality care, there is higher demand from providers, physicians and advanced practice providers for more and better data about their patients so they can achieve the best outcomes possible," she said.

LINC's real-time intelligence comes from 1,900 hospitals and more than 8,000 post-acute facilities. It also includes data from 600-plus participating accountable care organizations, provider groups, peer management organizations and health plans. Additionally, it covers 49.3 million unique patients.

Fast clinical follow-up

Along with speedy, secure access to patient data, real-time notice of changes in care settings will allow for quicker follow-up when managing care transitions, Requeijo said. With LINC, the clinical team can easily and securely share information, such as changes to code status, medication changes, test and lab results and medical images, as they correspond about patient care.

Clinicians can quickly jump in to connect with the ER team when an admission to the hospital can be

data can make it easier to keep patients and their families in the loop as well, preventing frustration and improving their experience.

"We're always thinking about ways to create provider efficiencies as well as reduce documentation time and the volume of work our clinical teams and their facility partners are dealing with," Tyler said. "There's a lot of work that goes into communication between acute and post-acute care. That's a significant problem we can get out in front of to bolster the care we provide."

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— Paula Requeijo, MD, CMD, Curana

avoided or to plan a responsible discharge from the hospital back to the community.

Knowing instantly when a patient is leaving the acute-care setting can also boost facility readiness, helping care teams ensure that new medications and services (such as therapy and wound care) are ready when a resident returns, Requeijo said.

"When the care team can access quality data in a timely way, it leads to better patient care," she noted.

Reducing care complexity

Better access to clinical colleagues and faster exchange of healthcare

Added Requeijo: "Timely communication is key for high quality senior resident care transitions. As these discharges are usually complex, communication among peers in different care settings brings patients and their loved ones peace of mind. By innovating and investing in real-time intelligence systems, Curana Health is addressing provider, patient and facility staff requests for better communication. We are confident that LINC will be a wonderful solution for all." ■

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