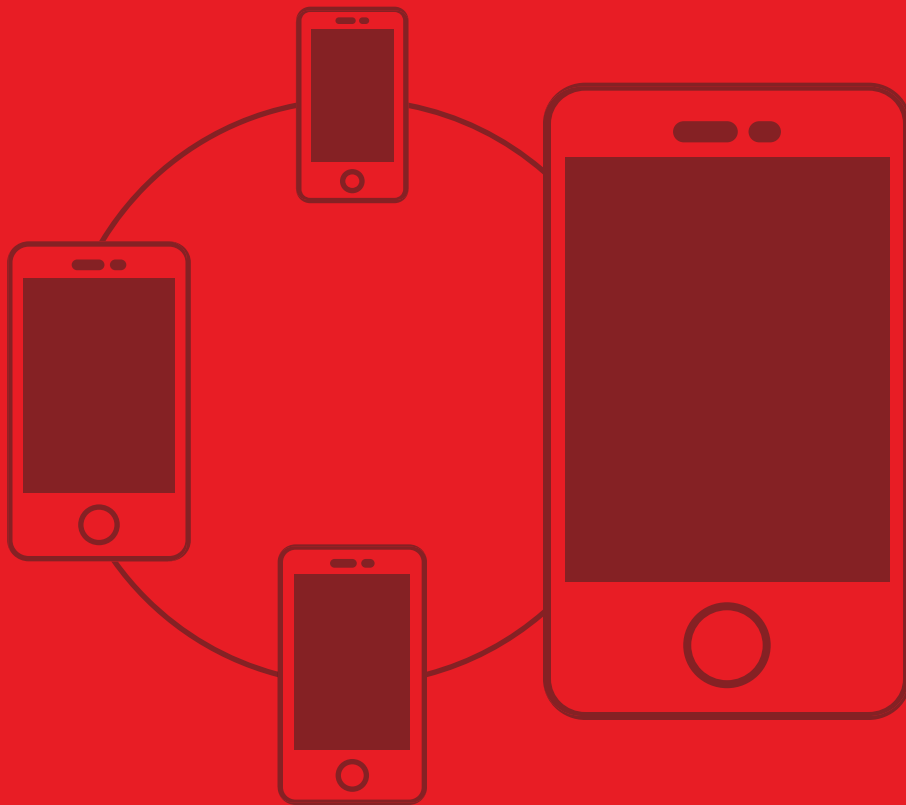


eBook

# The Next Phase Of Clinical Communications



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# Introduction

*Bridging the gap between electronic data and safe, efficient, high-quality team-based care*

Healthcare's transition to value-based payment has many hospitals and health systems struggling to improve clinical workflow efficiency in the electronic health record (EHR) era. This issue, however, is taking the forefront as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and commercial payers are asking healthcare organizations to accept more financial risk.

Reducing financial risk includes more than improving patient outcomes so that fewer medical and physician services are utilized. Rather, reducing financial risk means improving operational efficiencies and allowing organizations to increase patient throughput, reduce length of stay and decrease physicians' and other providers' wasted time.

The root of the problem is that communication between healthcare teams can be haphazard at times or hindered by poorly designed processes. Inefficiencies emerge when a link in the clinical communication chain is broken, which leaves providers waiting instead of delivering care. In most of these situations, the result is wasted time, but in more serious scenarios can result in patient errors or harm. Both scenarios drive up costs for the organization while reducing satisfaction and engagement for patients and providers.

This team-based healthcare delivery environment requires organizations to improve their clinical communications. A fully integrated, mobile clinical communication platform reduces inefficiencies, optimizes workflows and improves the timeliness of information and care delivery. Data from the EHR and other mission-critical systems as well as collected insight from the care team is unified in one, easily accessible location. In short, the communication chain remains intact, reducing inefficient workflows, speeding patient throughput, improving patient satisfaction and outcomes while increasing reimbursement under value-based care models.

**Healthcare delivery today requires organizations to significantly improve their clinical communications.**





# Existing clinical communication workflows are inefficient

Given the increasing complexity of high-risk, high-cost patients arriving in hospitals every day, effective care team communication is becoming more and more vital. 75% of patients age 65 or older have three or more chronic conditions, which account for 93 percent of all Medicare spending.<sup>[1]</sup> These patients generally require collaboration among multiple physician specialists. Additional support is required from numerous clinical support staff, nearly all of whom need to be included in patient-focused communication so that safe and effective care is promptly delivered.

However, in large and small hospitals and health systems alike, providers are rarely in the same place in the hospital at the same time to have patient discussions and make care decisions. Meanwhile, patients also need frequent communication about progress to ensure they remain satisfied and engaged in their care.

Unfortunately, most health system clinical communication processes are not optimized. To communicate within teams, providers still use antiquated methods such as internal phone systems, pagers, Intercoms and aimless searches through corridors. Electronic messaging functionality is available through EHR systems, but workstations are usually inaccessible or inconvenient at the point of care when providers need them the most.

**Currently, providers often use different mobile devices with encrypted communication apps, which raise HIPAA privacy and security concerns.**





Further disruption to effective communication occurs when clinical teams within the hospital may not know exactly which physician to contact to progress the patient's care journey. Depending on the shift or facility, providers may need to search for a physician's name in a spreadsheet or on a white board and leave phone and EHR-based messages that may not be returned for hours, leading to further wasted time, provider and patient frustration, and increased costs.

The next phase of clinical communication overcomes these challenges by driving organizations toward integrated mobile communications. Currently, providers often use different mobile devices and communication apps, which raise HIPAA privacy and security concerns. Incompatible or standalone mobile communications technology also leads to ineffective communication because rarely is everyone on the team adequately linked or alerted to these group text communications. The lack of standardization affects communication clarity because it is challenging to derive context while using an app that is not designed for healthcare team collaboration.

Apart from the care delays and slow response times, the danger of inefficient and ineffective communication is that these less-informed physician orders can result in patients receiving care they may not need, which means wasted care or patient harm. A comprehensive, integrated mobile communications platform is the answer.

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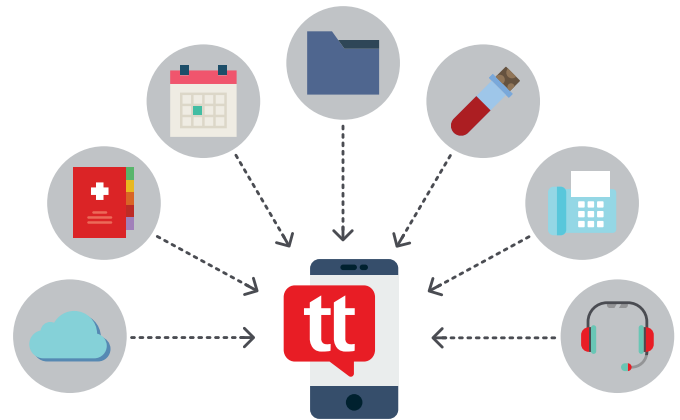
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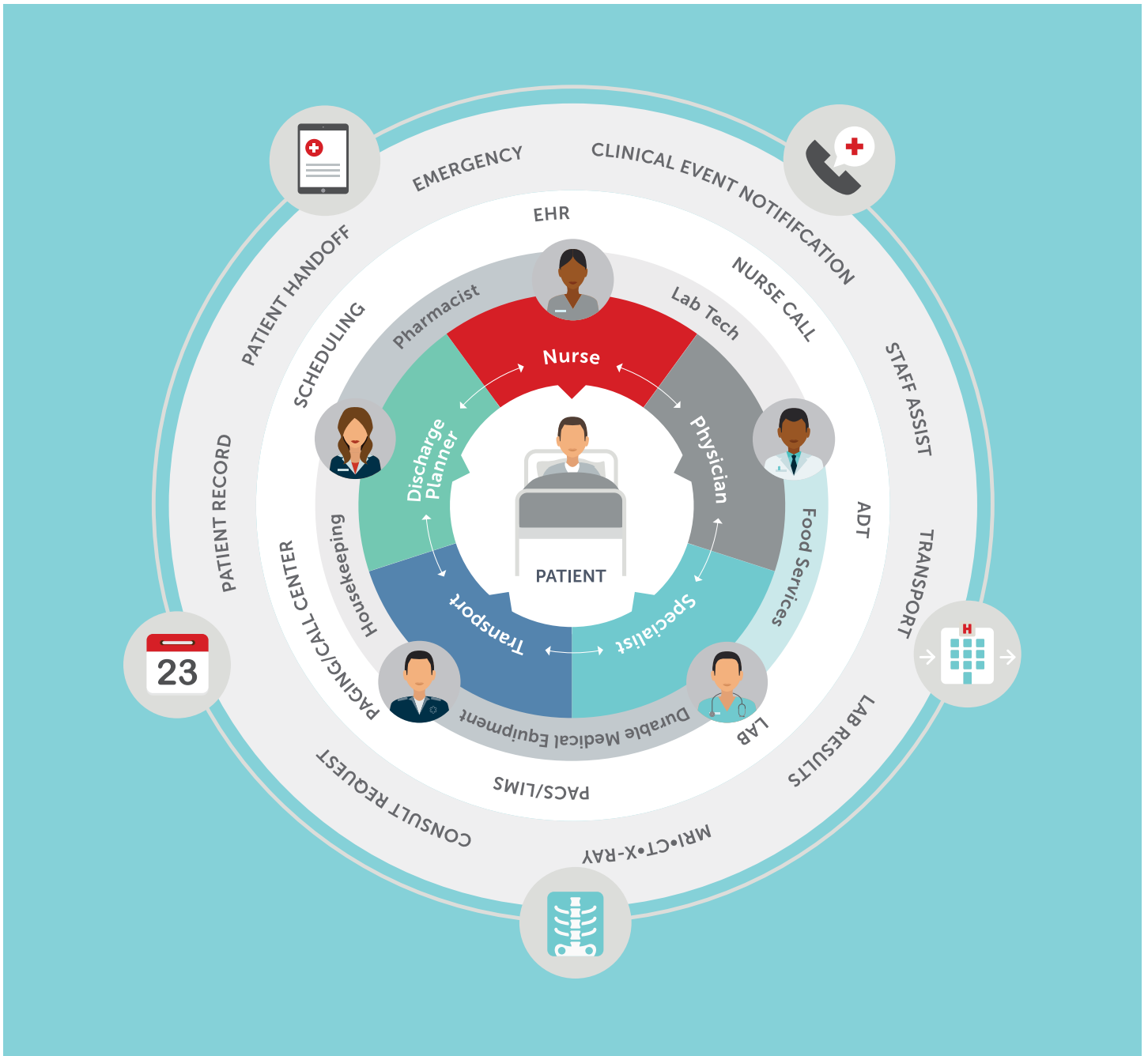
# Integration, flexibility are essential to confront emerging demands

Next-phase clinical communication technology requires more than a mobile-friendly version of the EHR. The fully integrated mobile communications platform needs to deliver only essential information by extracting data from various clinical systems of record through an easily navigable interface for faster information exchange. At or near the point of care, this drives safer and more effective decision making.



To maximize its effectiveness, a mobile platform should provide access to:

- **ADT, lab results, and imaging:** Providing physicians with real-time test results helps them formulate care decisions and allows patients to promptly transition to their next phase of care and move closer to discharge.
- **Nurse call systems:** Prompt responses to patient calls result in higher satisfaction and better-informed providers who are properly prepped before seeing the patient.
- **Scheduling software:** Care teams that are spread across multiple facilities and shifts benefit from instant smartphone access to available physicians who can attend to a patient's specific needs.
- **Answering and paging services:** Linking with legacy services from a single mobile platform can consolidate outreach methods, which also delivers the flexibility that promotes physician and clinical support staff adoption.
- **Streamlined calling:** When a phone call is more efficient, providers need to reach the team member through a single tap on their mobile message thread or user profile.
- **EHR integration:** Access to EHR patient data saves physicians and nurses valuable time, while EHR alerts keep them informed of critical results. Write-back access allows select messages from the thread to be added to the patient record.



An unbroken chain of communication enables providers to fully share relevant information with patients and care teams and establish more accurate expectations about their transitions, inside and outside of the hospital.





Centralizing hospital staff on the same enterprise-wide platform eliminates the need to search through mobile operating system-proprietary apps, email, or the EHR for relevant messages. Real-time, or near real-time, collaboration drives faster care decisions and higher patient throughput to grow revenue and patient satisfaction.

A single platform can also connect independent, community physicians to a health system in a way that safeguards Protected Health Information (PHI). With aHITRUST certified platform, for example, health systems can confidently create, access, store, or exchange PHI among care teams in a safe and efficient process.

Secure integration with mission-critical systems and communications also improves workflow efficiency for community and hospital-employed physicians. From their mobile device, physicians have comprehensive, reliable information to support decisions, while transparency of communication flow improves team-wide understanding.

An unbroken chain of communication enables providers to fully share relevant information with patients and care teams and establish more accurate expectations about their transitions, inside and outside of the hospital. Ample communication translates to more activated and engaged patients, but also improves the hospital's performance on HCAHPS, bolstering a hospital's reputation and resulting in greater Medicare reimbursement.



**Real-time, or near real-time, collaboration drives faster care decisions and higher patient throughput to grow revenue and patient satisfaction.**





# Improve clinical quality and patient satisfaction

While improving efficiency is a worthy goal in itself, cohesive clinical communications also supports organizations' financial performance as they transition to value-based payment models. Point-of-care access to data and care team input drives timely, effective action, reducing wasted time and care that increases costs for healthcare organizations and patients.

A consolidated, mobile platform offers this data and communication access by connecting providers regardless of time or place. For example, an advanced mobile clinical communications platform that is fully integrated with hospital systems eliminates the need to access separate staff directories or schedules. From the mobile device, a provider could text any member of the care team involved in the discussion, or the relevant physician on duty who can make treatment decisions. A combined suite of communications and information-sharing features expedites order entry for fewer delays during the different stages in the care episode.

The most immediate clinical benefit of this efficiency is that patients can receive needed care faster, avoiding prolonged physical discomfort or added anxiety about their condition or treatment. This care is likely to be safer due to adequate care team collaboration and sharing of relevant information. Such a platform can avoid needless searches through the EHR to find information, which can cause delays and provider frustration. Improved decision support can also prevent unnecessary tests or treatments that can contribute to patient discomfort and poorer outcomes.

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# Growing the bottom line with any payment model

The financial benefits of an integrated, enterprise-wide clinical communications platform are numerous, such as greater patient throughput and more rapid bed turnover. Under value-based care models, unnecessarily long hospital stays are not financially rewarded, while avoidable readmissions are currently penalized and will continue to be punished for the foreseeable future.

With highly accessible, relevant data and communication transparency across the care team, staff are equipped with accurate and reliable patient statuses, histories, and other information when performing rounds. Improving quality on this important element of inpatient care can reduce incidents of costly yet avoidable readmissions, which negatively impact financial performance, patient satisfaction, and most importantly, clinical outcomes. Safer care can also reduce a physician's liability risk, leading to more affordable professional liability insurance premiums.



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**Apart from avoiding financial losses, effective communication translates to an increase of true productivity among all providers.**

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Apart from avoiding financial losses, effective communication translates to an increase of true productivity among all providers. Instead of being pulled in numerous directions due to disorganized workflows and multiple communication methods, providers can deliver purpose-driven care, accomplishing tasks with fewer interruptions and less wasted effort, all of which will only improve reimbursement. Eliminating unnecessary tests or treatments, thanks to real-time test and lab results available at the point of care, reduces costs and improves value-based payment.



# The next phase of clinical communications is now

Simply implementing enterprise-wide changes and hoping for the best will not ensure long-term success. Organizations need to maximize clinical communication effectiveness through analysis of the integrated, mobile platform usage across numerous metrics, including adoption. High user adoption rates, particularly among nurses and other clinical support staff, increase ROI and elicit more rapid improvements. Analytics and workflow mapping capabilities that are available on advanced platforms also shed light on how and when providers are using the clinical communications tools. Studying utilization offers insight into patient flow bottlenecks, communication barriers and other efficiency improvement opportunities.

Reconfigured clinical workflows combined with a mobile and integrated clinical communications platform enables healthcare organizations to truly maximize their investments in their EHR system. Despite the enormous resources devoted to these data repositories, significant information access and communication challenges remain.

By advancing to the next phase of clinical communications, the most relevant enterprise-wide data is efficiently and accurately accessed to inform safe, effective decision making and care delivery. Streamlined communication and workflow mapping further drives efficiency as well as more cohesive care team collaboration inside and outside the four walls of the hospital.

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The resulting cost savings from the improved communication and efficiency will increase reimbursement while satisfying staff and patients. As throughput increases and patient length of stay decreases, outcomes and satisfaction will improve. Likewise, apart from reduced costs, more effective communication will drive greater overall clinical productivity, which under value-based, or any payment model, is critical.

Although healthcare is a business unlike any other, it is still a business. As healthcare organizations everywhere are now learning, the key to thriving in this unique and transitioning business model is that effective clinical communication drives greater efficiency for long-term care quality and financial success.

<sup>[1]</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: Multiple Chronic Conditions." Website. <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/multiple-chronic.htm>

# About TigerConnect

As healthcare's largest provider of clinical communication solutions, TigerConnect helps physicians, nurses, and other staff communicate and collaborate more effectively, accelerating productivity, reducing costs, and improving patient outcomes. With 6,000 facilities, 99.99% uptime, and over 10 million messages processed each day, TigerConnect continually delivers advanced product innovations and integrates with critical hospital systems such as the EHR, nurse call, and scheduling solutions.

The company's commitment to client success is reflected in its broad support organization that works directly with clients at every stage to streamline communication workflows and achieve the highest possible ROI.

Learn how clients like RWJBarnabas, Geisinger, and LifePoint are using TigerConnect to solve healthcare's biggest communication challenges.



[Request A Demo](#)

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## Website

[www.TigerConnect.com](http://www.TigerConnect.com)

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