



## How Avita Home Health & Hospice Eased Communication and Scheduling for Hospice Staff

When Catherine Sapp took the role as executive director of Avita Home Health & Hospice in September 2019, one of the first areas of improvement that she identified was communication. The Galion, Ohio-based non-profit provider serves eight counties throughout central and northern Ohio, with staff members who are often on the move, working out of their cars.

“They’re in the office for short amounts of time throughout the day, but then they are out seeing patients, so reliable messaging is so important,” Sapp said during a recent webinar with Hospice News. Unfortunately, Avita had staff members communicating with a consumer communication app, rather than one designed specifically for health care. Avita’s old app:

- Restricted the number of people in group messaging
- Was not HIPAA-compliant
- Could not send patient health images, such as wound pictures

As such, staff members could not speak freely to each other without risking a patient’s protected health information (PHI). The manual workarounds then created more work for staff.

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### **Avita gained three key benefits from TigerConnect:**

- **HIPAA-compliant messaging**
- **Ease of use**
- **Broadcast messaging**

To solve its challenge, Avita turned to TigerConnect, a leading health care collaboration and communication platform that puts information, data and alerts in the hands of care teams. Here are three top benefits the provider gained from implementing the solution.

### **HIPAA-compliant messaging**

Home-based care is delivered, by definition, outside of the office, so using common consumer messaging apps means staff members and agency owners are constantly skirting HIPAA violations. With the secure TigerConnect app, Avita can do each of the following and remain in HIPAA compliance, no matter where the registered nurse or patient is located:

- Update patient contact information
- Receive updated order information
- Revise billing and insurance information
- Utilize document scanning (such as images and advance directives)
- Upload patient info into the EMR
- Avoid a deluge of administrative work at the end of each day



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— **Catherine Sapp**  
Executive Director  
Avita Home Health & Hospice

“We were actually able to reduce our time from initial assessment to final claim by over 21 days,” Sapp said. “We are not shuffling paper around, we are not losing paper. It’s been very helpful in that regard.”

### **Easy to learn, easy to use**

A hospice provider’s need for health care-specific communication tools goes beyond HIPAA compliance. There are a number of areas where hospices require a communication tool built specifically for the industry, such as the ability to set up multiple groups or sending and receiving expedient notifications and updates, whether on patient needs or an alert when a patient passes away. The app is also ideal for providing overall family feedback.

None of this would be possible, though, without easy training and usage. TigerConnect has shown to have high adoption and usability.

“I knew I needed to cater to those who maybe struggled with technology,” Sapp said. “We learned very quickly, if you can text, you can use TigerConnect. We live in an age of smartphones. Everybody has one. Everybody knows how to text. This is just a different application in which you do it. But the simplicity is there.”

Sapp and Avita were able to work closely with the TigerConnect implementation team in both the functionality and the staff training, which took just three one-hour sessions for the entire group. The smooth process means that now, when Avita adds a new staff member, they spend about 10 to 15 minutes on training.

“They never have questions,” Sapp said. “For me as a leader, for a staff member who is orienting to our organization, that’s just worth its weight in gold, because nobody wants to spend a ton of time learning a new application. You’re already having to learn a new EHR, potentially. You’re learning a new email system. There is information-overload when you’re learning a new job. If we can take some of that stress away, then that is definitely a worthwhile investment for us.”

### **Broadcast messaging**

Once a hospice has trained its employees on TigerConnect and they’re using it easily and effectively in the field, the solution’s mass communication capability becomes crucial. This is broadcast messaging, which enables an operator to update all staff members, including RNs in the field, in real time.

“It’s really hard to get everybody gathered for meetings, for announcements,” Sapp said. “Checking emails is hit or miss at times with staff members. TigerConnect seems to be more readily available and just easier for staff to receive communications.”

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Sapp and her team find myriad benefits to the broadcast messaging tool. On a direct-care basis, the tool disseminates updates of the ever-changing COVID guidelines and company policies. The staffing benefits are massive too. Avita staff members use TigerConnect to coordinate schedule changes or request coverage. Sapp has been delighted to see the ways in which the easy-to-use TigerConnect has tapped into, and built upon, the staff's sense of camaraderie.

“One of my favorite things to do on broadcast is to recognize our staff,” Sapp said. “When we receive a phone call or a letter or a card from a patient or family, that gives me the opportunity to very quickly share that with the staff. Everybody gets to see it, everybody gets to recognize that co-worker, and we get to recognize them all together and give them the accolades that they deserve.”

Hospice care providers carry a great deal of stress each and every day. Key technologies like TigerConnect help care teams work more efficiently and stay connected, enabling staff to deliver the most effective and compassionate care for patients and their families.

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