

# The Ultimate Guide to Modernizing Patient Transfers



Improving patient transfers with  
seamless, real-time clinical  
communication



# It's time to modernize patient transfer workflows

Despite rapid advances in technology, many hospitals and health systems are burdened by a high margin of error during patient transfers. The lack of clear care team communication is a contributing factor – many hospitals and transfer center staff rely on fragmented methods of communication including pagers, faxes, and phone calls to facilitate patient transfers. Fragmented communication prevents providers from communicating effectively which puts patient safety at risk. Delays in receiving critical patient information, missed phone calls and unclear communication can lead to medical errors.

Miscommunication in healthcare poses a dangerous risk to patient safety as shown by the following statistics:

- 80% of serious medical errors were attributed to miscommunication while transferring patients.<sup>1</sup>
- About 46% of patient transfers are delayed and associated with increased mortality.<sup>2</sup>

Whether conducting facility-to-facility transfers or floor-to-floor transfers, gaps in patient transfer workflows often lead to leakage to out of network facilities, delays in treatment, longer-than-necessary lengths of stay, and an increased risk for medical errors. Innovative hospitals and health systems looking to improve care quality and prevent referral leakage are giving patient transfer workflows a closer look. When put under the microscope, it becomes clear that the problem is often poor communication, ineffective collaboration, and outdated technology.

<sup>1</sup> "Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare Releases Targeted Solutions Tool for Hand-Off Communications", Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare, Jun 27, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Churpek MM, Wendlandt B, Zadavec FJ, Adhikari R, Winslow C, Edelson DP. Association between intensive care unit transfer delay and hospital mortality: A multicenter investigation. J Hosp Med.





## Common challenges to patient transfer workflows

Seamless patient transfer workflows ensure that patients receive quality care at the right time. Transferring a patient can be a cumbersome and inefficient process for even the best care teams, often resulting in delays in patient care and a suboptimal experience for patients, families, and healthcare providers.

Slower communication technologies like pagers and fax machines add to the abundant opportunities for bottlenecks during patient transfers. Clinical communication and collaboration platforms remove the roadblocks to better information sharing, coordination, and care plan follow-through in the following patient transfer workflows:

- Emergency Department to Inpatient Transfers
- Inpatient Floor-to-Floor Transfers
- Skilled Nursing Facility Transfers
- Facility-to-Facility Transfers

# Emergency department to inpatient transfers

Americans are waiting more than one and a half hours in the Emergency Department to be admitted or discharged.<sup>3</sup> The unpredictability of the Emergency Department makes this workflow particularly challenging for caregivers and frustrating for patients. A complicated admissions process and siloed hospital departments can lead to extended delays in the transfer process and less patients being treated.

Communication delays between the ED and inpatient floors and difficulty finding the right provider results in inefficient workflows and longer patient wait times.

## How TigerConnect improves this workflow

The TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform connects entire care teams with a single app to support more efficient patient admissions from the ED.

- When an ED Provider decides to admit a patient, they can message the Hospitalist On-Call role in TigerConnect, without needing to know who's on call that day or the person's name.
- After they discuss the patient's condition and the Hospitalist On-Call accepts admission, the admission order automatically activates a group message with the Inpatient Admission team.
- All critical care team members can discuss the patient's information, assign a patient bed, and complete the transfer process faster.

<sup>3</sup> Becker's Hospital Review accessed 12/16/2022. [www.beckershospitalreview.com/rankings-and-ratings/er-wait-times-by-state.html](http://www.beckershospitalreview.com/rankings-and-ratings/er-wait-times-by-state.html)





## Inpatient floor-to-floor transfers

When it comes to inpatient transfers, a smooth patient handoff is critical. Multiple roles are involved in inpatient floor-to-floor transfers, including sending providers, Charge Nurses and receiving providers – making clear communication crucial.

All care team members involved in the transfer must be clear on the patient's needs to prevent important information such as medication administration, contraindications, or questions for the incoming care team are not overlooked. Gaps in communication often lead to increased time from transfer decision to transfer.

### How TigerConnect improves this workflow

The ability to send secure messages and set up automated alerts within TigerConnect reduces dangerous communication gaps, ensuring vital patient information is not lost in transit.

- Secure messaging with the ability to send critical patient information keeps everyone informed of the patient transfer details.
- Role-based messaging with a scheduling integration ensures the correct on-call care team member receives messages, even from shift to shift.
- With TigerConnect, critical patient alarms are automatically routed directly to the nurse's phone, saving precious time. The on-call nurse can send a message with updates on the patient's condition during the transfer process.

# Skilled nursing facility transfers

Moving patients from the hospital setting to an appropriate skilled nursing facility is one of the most challenging transfer scenarios. Case Managers must ensure the skilled nursing facility meets the necessary criteria to handle the patient's specialized care (rehabilitation, memory care, therapeutics) and wait for the facility to respond.

Streamlined skilled nursing facility transfers require asynchronous communication throughout the entire process to prevent transfer delays and ensure patients are transferred efficiently.

## How TigerConnect improves this workflow

Each skilled nursing facility transfer is an individualized effort from beginning to end. The TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform helps facilitate better patient handoffs.

- After a Case Manager identifies a skilled nursing facility for a patient, they must place a referral order and wait for the facility to respond. With TigerConnect, the Case Manager will receive an alert the moment a facility responds, speeding up the transfer process.
- With TigerConnect, Case Managers can share transfer details with facilities in real-time using secure messaging, including essential documents to complete the transfer.
- Faster communication ensures that sending providers and facilities are aligned, resulting in faster skilled nursing facility transfers.





## Facility-to-facility transfers

Inefficient communication processes slow down facility-to-facility transfers and put patient outcomes and satisfaction at risk. This workflow usually involves many back-and-forth phone calls, pages, emails, voice messages, and consulting an on-call schedule to find the right provider that can accept the patient.

Inability to streamline communication during facility-to-facility transfers can lead to long wait times, referral leakage, and poor patient and provider satisfaction.

### **How TigerConnect improves this workflow**

TigerConnect can streamline how transfer centers manage incoming transfer requests, coordinate with sending and receiving providers, and help prevent referral leakage.

- Secure, real-time messaging makes it easy for Transfer Center Coordinators to verify bed availability at targeted facilities, eliminating the need for multiple phone calls.
- If a bed is available, the Transfer Center Coordinator can initiate a group message between the accepting provider and sending provider to share patient information such as lab results, X-rays, and vitals.
- Replacing phone calls and pages with asynchronous secure messaging, yields faster responses and smoother patient transfers.

# TigerConnect customer success stories

## **Enabling efficient, informed, and quality-focused decisions during patient transfers**

A New Mexico health system used TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform and TigerConnect Patient Engagement to optimize the patient transfer process between rural facilities and internal providers. The health systems decreased unnecessary transfers, improved referring and accepting provider satisfaction and reduced yearly internal calls by 86% - freeing up resources for external calls.

[Learn more](#)

## **The power of streamlined patient transfers: lessons from University of Maryland Medical System**

The University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) needed to quickly facilitate an emergency transfer for a patient experiencing a Central Retinal Artery Occlusion. Using an integration between their EHR and the TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform, the care team expedited the patient transfer via helicopter due to the time-sensitivity of the patient's condition. Through TigerConnect, the total time from onset to treatment was 3 hours and 22 minutes.

[Learn more](#)

## **Westchester reduces transport times for faster care delivery and lower costs**

Westchester Medical Center Health Network significantly reduced the transfer time between its emergency department and its 10 hospitals by eliminating the call center intermediary and allowing providers to directly share patient information using TigerConnect. This resulted in a 13-minute reduction in transport times across all facilities and one facility saving 34 minutes.

[Learn more](#)







## The proven path to more effective patient transfers

Modernizing patient transfer workflows is essential to improve patient safety and reduce risk. However, the complicated nature of hospital communication can present obstacles. Multiple healthcare providers must coordinate on the transfer plan and securely discuss patient details. This includes the patient's medical history, current condition, and treatment plan. This information needs to be communicated clearly and efficiently to ensure that the transfer is carried out smoothly and that the patient receives the appropriate care during the transfer process. Communicating through a combination of phone calls, voicemails, pagers, emails, and faxes can create a chaotic workflow.

With TigerConnect, hospitals and health systems can:

- Improve patient transfer communication through secure group and team messages
- Reduce the time it takes to facilitate patient transfers with role-based communication
- Update patients and families about their transfer status with robust patient communication

The key to successful patient transfers boils down to transparency, collaboration, and intelligent alerts to keep both internal and external providers aligned. TigerConnect helps hospitals and health systems overcome communication barriers by taking a holistic approach to improving patient transfers based on years of analyzing patient transfer workflows at different organizations.

For more information about how to use TigerConnect for secure messaging in your hospital or health system, visit [www.tigerconnect.com](http://www.tigerconnect.com).

# About TigerConnect

TigerConnect transforms healthcare with the industry's most widely adopted clinical collaboration platform – uniquely modernizing how doctors, nurses, care teams, patients, and data connect. With solutions spanning care communication, patient engagement, scheduling, alarm notifications, nurse call, and more, TigerConnect accelerates productivity, reduces costs, and improves patient outcomes, safely and securely. Trusted by more than 7,000 healthcare entities for user-friendly yet enterprise-ready solutions, TigerConnect delivers 99.995% verifiable uptime for more than 10 million messages each day.



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