Behavioral Health Business

VOICES

Will O'Connor, M.D.
Chief Medical Information Officer
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In this Voices Interview, Behavioral Health Business sits down with Will O'Connor, Chief Medical Information Officer at TigerConnect, to talk about how workflow inefficiencies can have a significant impact on care coordination and patient outcomes for behavioral health facilities. He also explains how streamlined workflows can remove communication breakdowns, improve care coordination and speed patient interventions, and he discusses how TigerConnect is helping providers achieve such efficiencies.

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Q: Behavioral Health Business: **What career experiences do you most draw from in your role today?**

Will O'Connor: While my specialty is orthopedics, I've held a number of jobs in hospitals for about 37 years. I gained invaluable insights into the challenges and complexities that health care providers face on a daily basis. My time as a clinician allowed me to understand the critical importance of effective communication and collaboration among care teams.

Ultimately, without clear communication, what you get is slow and inefficient care. Poor communication can impact clinical workflows and lead to medical errors and other potential risks. These health care challenges fueled my passion for leveraging technology to address these challenges and improve care delivery.

Q: Behavioral Health Business: **How have you seen the demand for behavioral health services change since the start of the pandemic, and what impact has it had on the industry?**

O'Connor: The demand for behavioral health services surged during the pandemic due to increased stressors. It strained health care resources, leading to longer wait times for care. Telehealth solutions helped, but digital disparities remain. Innovative approaches, stigma reduction, and increased resources are vital to meet the growing needs of mental health care post-pandemic.

Q: Behavioral Health Business: **What are some of the most common workflow inefficiencies that you see in behavioral health care, and how do they impact patient outcomes? How do CC&C solutions play a role?**

O'Connor: Common inefficiencies we see in behavioral health and in a lot of other segments is not knowing who to contact for something, lack of documented processes, and staff using different communication methods — such as phone, email, etc. — which makes it challenging to remember how to contact people. Clinical communication and collaboration (CC&C) solutions bring everyone in the health system together on a common communication platform. If everyone is using the same communication method, you're laying a solid foundation to streamline communication. CC&C enables real-time communication, plus the ability to send messages,make voice or video calls.

Q: Behavioral Health Business: How has TigerConnect helped behavioral health facilities overcome workflow inefficiencies and improve patient outcomes?

O'Connor: A customer that comes to mind is a health system that maintains 11 acute care hospitals and treats more than 3 million patients per year. Their peer recovery program is designed to provide support and guidance to individuals who are in recovery from substance use disorders. With an EHR integration with TigerConnect, an automatic trigger alerts peer recovery specialists of patient readmissions and other time-sensitive workflows enabling the specialists to implement faster interventions and get the patients the care they need. This has helped reduce their response time to under 10 minutes.

Q: Behavioral Health Business: In what capacity will standardized workflow approaches improve care coordination in behavioral health care?

O'Connor: Standardizing workflows defines a common way for work to be done. That helps reduce the cognitive burden that some care teams feel when they aren't clear of all the steps in a workflow or everyone has a different way of doing their work. It removes the guesswork.

Q: Behavioral Health Business: How can behavioral health facilities identify areas of workflow inefficiency in behavioral health care and inform process improvements?

O'Connor: Get started by identifying one workflow that is causing your care teams the most hardships. From there identify all the roles involved in that workflow — physicians, nurses, admin and operational staff — what information they need to know or share, what method of communication are they primarily using today. Set a goal for improvement — is it improved response time, is it faster admissions, etc. — document the time you believe it takes today so you can compare to how you want it to improve.

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In 2023, the behavioral health industry is being defined by...

"...a convergence of technology and empathy, where innovative digital solutions are seamlessly integrated with patient care to enhance patient outcomes and bridge the gap in mental health services. Health care technology is not only revolutionizing the way we diagnose and treat mental health conditions but also breaking down barriers to access. The technology is allowing for more personalized and effective interventions and helping to reach individuals in remote or underserved areas like never before."