Reaping the Benefits of Communication Transformation Beyond Expectations

Overview

Avita Home Health & Hospice is a rural non-profit organization based in Galion, Ohio. Their mission is to provide high-quality community healthcare and improve the quality of health in families throughout their lifespan. Their work includes wound care and palliative care in the comfort of their patients' own homes as well as those in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities.

Home health and hospice workers are on the move all day long. Their cars serve as mobile offices as they navigate between patients' homes, the office, and the pharmacy. With most of their time spent in the field, efficient, real-time communication is required.

Challenge

Avita staff was communicating via a free group messaging app that didn't meet HIPAA requirements for protecting sensitive patient information. As a result, they could not refer to specific patient information in their messages, share images such as patient wound photos, or initiate calls to individuals or teams. Instead, they could only reference a patient's initials or chart number, requiring staff to take extra steps to locate and access the patient file in the

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> **Catherine Sapp**
> BSN, RN, Executive Director
> Avita Home Health & Hospice

electronic health record (EHR) system and confirm they had the correct information. The limited capabilities meant staff would often have to return to the office to fax information to the medical provider, wait for a return, and then implement an order. The app also limited the number of people that could be included in a group message which meant they would have to send out multiple messages to reach everyone. This all added up to delays in patient care and more work for the staff. This communication style also had the potential to cause medical errors that could become a liability.

Communication challenges also extended to Avita's on-call scheduling process. Nurses were carrying paper calendars which indicated the nurse on-call. Inevitably, schedule changes would happen which made it extremely difficult to keep up with while on the go.

Avita needed a reliable and user-friendly HIPAA-compliant communication platform that provided their staff the ability to:

- Distribute critical organization updates with broadcast messaging
- Connect staff and providers in real-time through voice, video, or text
- Securely discuss patient progress by sending images and video
- Access the most up to date on-call schedule at any time at their fingertips

Another important requirement for the solution they would be adopting was that it be easy to learn as in-house training resources were limited.

"We don't have large teams of trainers and educators, so our leadership team does the bulk of the orientation and training," said Catherine Sapp, Avita's executive director. "We needed to be able to maximize our time and make it easy for the employees as well. Ultimately, our goal was to make their jobs easier, not harder.

Solution

Avita chose TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform and Physician Scheduling to manage their communication and scheduling processes. They use TigerConnect role-based messaging functionality to quickly reach the correct on-duty or on-call staff for better collaboration. They also established groups within TigerConnect specific to home health, hospice, nurses, aides, and office staff to ensure they receive relevant information to their role. Messages are saved and visible using a unique feature known as "Roles".

Essentially, customizable clinical "Roles" are set up for an organization. Examples might be "Physician on Call" or "Nurse Supervisor". Instead of logging in individually, as shifts and team members change, the exiting team member logs out of the role and the new owner of the role logs in. This ensures that staff never have to be confused about who to reach out to for assistance or questions. In addition, patient updates and care plans are also easily visible and accessible to the new team member on duty.

For administrative announcements and information that needs to be shared with everyone, messages can be broadcast to the entire organization at once, eliminating the need for individual texts. This feature was especially important for managing communication within a highly mobile organization. Updates on the shifting COVID-19 guidelines, schedule changes, requests for shift coverage,

Saved
4
hours per week
of nurse time

Modernized
on-call scheduling process

21
day reduction in
service-to-claim time

HR announcements, staff recognition, and even surveys and questionnaires could also be distributed efficiently using the application. Replies to the initial broadcast message only go to the original sender, ensuring that the responses remain confidential and don't cause a flood of unnecessary messages.

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Integration with Avita's EHR makes it easy to update a patient's medical records. Clinicians can scan and upload documents, forms, and photos to add them to a patient's file from the field, eliminating the need to return to the office to make copies.

An additional valuable feature is the Do Not Disturb capability. This function allows workers on vacation or off-duty to turn off notifications and set times when they cannot b reached, allowing for better work/life balance and preventing burnout. With severe staffing shortages plaguing the healthcare industry, Avita realizes the necessity for staff down-time.

Avita adopted TigerConnect Physician Scheduling for managing their nurses' on-call schedules. Schedules are uploaded into the cloud-based platform so that staff can easily see who is on duty and reach the right person with a single tap. They no longer have to spend their time calling the office to find the right provider and can expedite care to patients.

"Now you don't have to think about who is on call, you don't have to text and ask that question or try to find that calendar, it's updated in real time, and you can just call that individual right from TigerConnect and that's paramount for our staff."

Results

Leveraging the TigerConnect Clinical Collaboration Platform helped Avita improve their communications at all levels of the organization, from the medical director and administration to the extended patient care teams. By communicating in real-time, Avita is able to save an average of 4 hours per week of nurse time in unnecessary administrative tasks and

trips between the office, pharmacy, and patient homes. Additional benefits were reduced patient wait times for care and a 21-day reduction in service-to-claim filing, which is a significant impact to cash flow and revenue cycles.

An unexpected, but welcome benefit was improved morale and increased camaraderie among staff. With most of the staff working in the field, they don't often have an opportunity to meet with each other and share experiences. TigerConnect provides a platform for staff to make connections with each other. For example, when a hospice patient passed away, staff were able to share memories, console each other and offer words of encouragement using the messaging platform.

"It's such an important part of the process for us as caregivers, is to be able to go through that process with our patients and our families, and often we're not afforded that opportunity," said Sapp. "[With TigerConnect], we're able to do that internally, and our morale is boosted not only because of that, but because they feel like they have what they need at their fingertips."

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.

Contact us

To schedule a demo or learn more about how TigerConnect can improve clinical communication efficiency for your organization, **contact us.**