

Palmetto State News



South Carolina Financial Management Association

April 2006

HFMA Healthcare Financial Management Association • Solutions and Opportunity... Now and for a Lifetime

CONNECTING HEALTHCARE COMMUNITIES:

A Patient Communications Portal Rolls Out In South Carolina

It has often been said that poor and inefficient communications are the greatest hidden cost in all of healthcare. To combat these costs and inefficiencies, in early 2002 a consortium of healthcare providers and associations in North Carolina began collaborating with the goal of building a common state online communication portal. The goal was to create a portal that all type of providers, payors and state healthcare agencies could use for requesting and transporting patient information via the Internet. In South Carolina, the same technology is being rolled out to payors and providers along the entire continuum of care. Several South Carolina based acute and post acute care facilities, DME companies and the State Medicaid program are using this portal to bring efficiency and accountability into their inter-organization patient communications.

According to Linda Harris, Director of Health Management at Spartanburg Regional Medical Center, "Our nursing home placement length of stay has been dramatically and positively impacted by the introduction of this technology to our discharge planning process. Communication is faster, more reliable, and less redundant." John Barber, Executive Vice President at White Oak Manor and owner of numerous assisted living, skilled nursing and independent living apartments in South Carolina, states, "This communication platform has radically improved our communications with acute care facilities. We can proactively process referrals. Our patients have a smoother transition and we spend less time gathering patient information from Spartanburg Regional Medical Center."

The Technology

The platform and technology created for the initiative uses a directory approach. A directory is a place on the Internet where each provider, payor, state agency, etc. can post a communication end point or mailbox. The technology is browser-based, so it requires no installation of hardware or software. Images are printed from any system directly through to any online mailbox through an encrypted secure and auditable transport. The system supports many other features such as virtual fax services, online form publisher, automated workflows and auto population of select existing forms. The new communication transport surpasses the old method of relying on fax machines, postal mail, and telephones. Communications are now auditable, meaning users can identify who received messages, (such as referrals, orders and prior authorizations) and when they were received.

Business Metrics & Outcomes

The North Carolina initiative has documented many improved business metrics.

1.35 day reduction in length of stay (LOS) for all patients transferred to extended care facilities by moving Medicaid authorizations and referral management online.

Percentage of patients having to wait over fifteen minutes for an order to be located has dropped from 6.35% to 0.32%

Payor interplan claim resolution cycle time was reduced by an average of 12 days.

Payor volume of re-requests to providers for claims information dropped by approximately 33%.

100% reduction in lost orders from providers.

100% reduction in payor write-offs due to missing orders.

69% reduction in payor technical denials.

The communication platform is currently used by over 5,000 healthcare users. The Georgia Hospital Association (GHA) recently announced that it has selected the same enabling technology to promote a Connecting Healthcare Communities initiative in Georgia.

For Additional Information

Please contact Donald Lee, donald.lee@providerlink.com, or (803)230-2895 for additional white papers, case studies, and information on enabling technologies.