

Concord Regional Visiting Nurse Association Improves Patient Satisfaction by Automating Scheduling

At a Glance

Organization

Concord Regional Visiting Nurse Association, Concord, N.H.

- Incorporated in 1899
- Serves 7,000 patients in 30 communities across New Hampshire

Solution Spotlight

- Horizon Homecare Agency Management System
- Horizon Homecare Advanced Clinicals
- Horizon Homecare Telephony

Critical Issues

- Transition from paper-based to automated scheduling
- Low patient satisfaction ratings
- Increase financial results

Results

- Improved operating margin by 104%
- Increased operating revenue by \$1 million while operating expenses increased by only \$400,000
- Decreased days in accounts receivable from 53 to 45
- Reduced the number of episodes with 10 or more visits to 20%
- Decreased the average number of visits per episode to 17.72

Profile

Since 1899, Concord Regional Visiting Nurse Association has provided community health services in central New Hampshire. It currently provides care to more than 7,000 patients annually in 30 communities and is considered a premier provider of homecare and hospice services in New Hampshire.

However, in 2005, Concord Regional VNA found that its patient satisfaction ratings were low. The reason: A decentralized, paper-based scheduling system created inaccuracy and inconsistency in matching patients with clinicians. Patient visits went unscheduled, and patients rarely saw the same clinician throughout the duration of care. Additionally, missed visits and inefficient documentation created revenue bottlenecks.

Challenge

Mary DeVeau, president and CEO, initiated a program to change the organization's scheduling processes. The primary goal she set for her staff of nearly 300 was to improve patient satisfaction through more accurate and efficient scheduling.

According to DeVeau, patient satisfaction was low because Concord visit assignments were inconsistent and, often, staff did

not meet the patient's clinical needs. Concord didn't have a good grasp of day-to-day staff availability, and the process for assigning clinicians was inefficient. Additionally, because scheduling was decentralized, one geographic area was overwhelmed with clinical staff while another lacked coverage. Concord decided to change the situation.

Answers

Concord abandoned its paper-based scheduling practices and fully implemented the automated scheduling functionality of the Horizon Homecare™ system. As a result, staff had to make a complete cultural and process shift. Concord created a special team to head the scheduling project in collaboration with clinical management. The project planning and implementation process encompassed all aspects of scheduling — from creating 12 new geographic clinical teams to identifying and standardizing visit lengths for each visit code type and building new model calendars for each staff member.

Concord used Horizon Homecare's automated scheduling to centralize all scheduling information. The system's flexibility enables Concord to enter extensive patient and staff preferences and requirements. This information allows scheduling staff to assign clinicians automatically to patients based on a variety of factors including: staff availability,

Case Study

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Mary DeVeau

President and CEO,

Concord Regional

Visiting Nurse Association

geographic location, clinical skills required and the physician’s plan of care.

“Horizon Homecare’s automatic scheduler handles the vast majority of our visits with virtually no intervention by scheduling staff,” says DeVeau. The system selects the most appropriate staff member for each visit, based on the staff member’s geographic location, skill level and staff availability from working calendars and physician orders. DeVeau explains that this gives schedulers more time to deal with special-case visits, including new admissions, readmissions or unanticipated visits.

“By using the automatic scheduler, patient visit frequency is electronically identified from the physician’s plan of care, which the clinician builds through the Horizon Homecare™ Advanced Clinicals system on the laptop in the patient’s home,” says DeVeau. “Horizon Homecare enables Concord to take a proactive, organized approach to meeting patient needs, a large part of which is matching them with appropriate clinical staff.”

The automated scheduling system also helps Concord avoid the inefficiencies that resulted from overlapping geographic delivery areas. By using the system to narrow territories, Concord provides more consistent staff assignment to

patients — enhancing the patient-clinician relationship and raising patient satisfaction.

Along with automated scheduling, Concord also implemented Horizon Homecare’s streamlined data processing functionality. By using the system’s time and travel and assignment completion capabilities on the laptop, clinicians decrease data entry and claim submission time. Concord also launched the Horizon Homecare Telephony application, which allows field clinicians to document visit information directly into the patient’s Horizon Homecare electronic medical record via telephone. With this solution, Concord reduces travel costs, data entry and claim submission time.

Results

Concord made a dramatic change from paper-based scheduling to the Horizon Homecare system’s automated personnel scheduling, with equally dramatic results. Patient satisfaction survey scores increased from 79% to 94%, and patient complaints decreased 57% in just one year. At the same time, Concord improved its nursing productivity rate. By enhancing scheduling efficiency, the organization leveraged field staff more effectively to increase referrals and admissions while decreasing the average visits per episode, unnecessary visits and mileage expenses.

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