

Milton S. Hershey Medical Center Sends Satisfaction Soaring with Call Center Solution

“RelayHealth’s CareEnhance® Call Center solution helped put our call center on the map.”

Diane Gutshall
Call Center Manager
Milton S. Hershey Medical Center

Hershey, Pa., is known as one of the sweetest places on earth—thanks to its famous chocolate. But at the town’s Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, a Level 1 trauma center, satisfaction soured because of a complicated and inconsistent patient transfer process. With the aid of RelayHealth’s CareEnhance® Call Center software, the provider established a 24x7 call center and a new transfer program. The process reduced transfers from hours to mere minutes, captured lost revenue, and satisfied referring and attending physicians, patients and insurance carriers.

Challenge

Historically, transferring a patient to the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center was cumbersome and inefficient. Without a system to document the transfer process, physicians were accepting patients without available beds. Patients with nonparticipating insurance carriers were also being accepted. Referring physicians were angry because they could not get quick responses. Attending physicians had to make multiple phone calls to finalize transfers. Patients arrived in the ED with staff unaware of what had previously transpired. And revenue was lost due to poor planning and lack of insurance precertification. In one instance, the medical center lost \$80,000 because a patient’s Medicare days had already been exhausted.

At a Glance

Organization

Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Hershey, Pa.

- 500 beds
- 26,000 admissions
- 50,000 ED visits
- 765,000 outpatient visits
- 123-bed children’s hospital

Solution Spotlight

- CareEnhance Call Center

Critical Issues

- Multiple calls required for a single transfer
- Lost revenue due to poor planning and lack of insurance precertification
- Dissatisfaction among referring and attending physicians, patients and insurance carriers

Results

- Transfers take on average 7.5 minutes vs. hours and approximately 100% of transfers are accommodated on the requested date
- Captured lost revenue through transfer process and increased gross revenue by \$22.4 million over three years through referral process
- Internal and external satisfaction soared

“We frustrated referring physicians, attending physicians, patients and their families,” explains Diane Gutshall, call center manager. “Our documentation was poor, and we lost transfers and the associated revenue.”

Answers

Step one was expanding call center hours so that referring physicians could use the existing MD Network access line any time to initiate patient transfers. "McDonald's, Wal-Mart and Wendy's are all open 24x7, so why wouldn't a hospital be open around the clock?" Gutshall comments. After making a modest software investment, the medical center opened its call center 24x7 to complete patient transfers.

Step two was developing a simplified transfer process using RelayHealth's CareEnhance Call Center solution. The goals were to improve referring physician relationships, enhance the institution's reputation for transfers, capture lost revenue through upfront insurance verification, create a standardized policy, and avoid accepting inappropriate transfers.

Call center staff, along with key clinical personnel, developed a transfer process that requires a single call to a single number. The referring physician calls the MD Network, and the call center staff member uses RelayHealth's efficient and user-friendly system to initiate a call between the referring physician/facility, the admissions nurse, the on-call attending physician as well as the insurance verifier for bed assignment and insurance precertification. All transfer data is entered into the system, which also supports documentation and reporting needs.

"Having the documentation from RelayHealth's system was key for call center staff as we changed our faltering system," Gutshall reports. "Previously, there was no way to identify how many transfers came in, and there were probably 15 different access points when transferring a patient into our facility," she says. "Now we've standardized our process so one call does it all!"

Building on the transfer process, staff decided to expand use of RelayHealth's CareEnhance Call Center software to improve the outpatient referral program. The medical center was losing referrals because appointments could not be scheduled in a timely manner. With the new process, two dedicated staff members field calls from referring physicians and enter the necessary data into RelayHealth's system to facilitate appointments.

Results

Coupling a new process with the latest in call center software, Milton S. Hershey Medical Center transformed its transfer process. Transfers are now performed, on average, in 7.5 minutes, and the hospital attempts to accommodate 100% of transfers on the requested date.

Financially, the provider no longer loses revenue because inpatient access now has adequate documentation for managing bed triage and verifying insurance coverage. The hospital no longer accepts transferred patients whose insurance is not affiliated with the medical center, unless appropriate prior arrangements are made. And with the referral project, the medical center has increased gross revenue by \$22.4 million over three years by improving referring physician relationships and accommodating more patient visits.

"We met all our goals by using RelayHealth's CareEnhance Call Center to manage our transfer process, and the referral project was icing on the cake," says Gutshall. We corrected mistakes and improved referring physician, attending physician, patient and insurance satisfaction. RelayHealth's CareEnhance Call Center system helped put our call center on the map."

About RelayHealth

- RelayHealth is part of McKesson Corporation, America's oldest and largest healthcare services company
- The industry leader in contact center solutions since 1986
- The most widely tested, clinically validated triage guidelines in the industry
- Innovator in the integration of a consumer health Web portal with healthcare contact center software
- Fortune 18 company dedicated to continuous research and development
- Leader in providing health education content to healthcare contact centers
- Considered best in class products and services

For more information about CareEnhance Call Center, contact your client executive or call RelayHealth at 800-981-8601.



**4343 N. Scottsdale Road
Suite 150
Scottsdale AZ 85251**

www.relayhealth.com

1.800.981.8601

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