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Keys to Successful Remote Care Management Implementations

We are at a crossroads in the delivery of care in the United States. The number of Americans age 65 and older will rise to 54 million by 2020 and 84% of them will live with at least one chronic disease. Couple those numbers with the fact that people with chronic conditions make up the 20% of people that consume 80% of the healthcare dollars spent,[1] and it becomes clear that there is a need to find solutions that will address these growing pressures.

Telehealth technology can be a valuable tool in addressing these challenges by helping move delivery of care from higher acuity settings to the home. By connecting patients to health support and management tools outside a medical office or facility, remote care management programs can be a cost effective way for Medicare Advantage plans to help members become more proactive in their own health and facilitate effective management of chronic conditions.

A Spectrum of Remote Care Solutions

Remote care is a broad category of healthcare delivery with different sub categories. The greatest success of remote care will come from actively managing patient conditions in near real-time to help affect behavior change.

Telecare

Telecare is categorized as monitoring an individual's mobility and general safety in the home. A range of assisted technologies, such as alarms and sensors, can monitor activity changes over time, providing support and assurance to vulnerable people who may be homebound.

Telehealth

Telehealth programs directly involve clinical professionals as well as patients in the care process, which is facilitated by tools and protocols. By providing information directly to the patient including vital signs, status feedback, and training videos, patients can become better educated, more capable and more confident about managing their own health.

Telemedicine

Telemedicine is represented as the use of medical information that is exchanged from one site to another via electronic communications to improve a patient's clinical health status. Telemedicine includes a growing variety of applications and services using two-way video, email, smart phones, wireless tools and other forms of telecommunications technology. For example, someone living in a rural area may be referred to an ENT for follow-up on an exam by a primary care doctor. After examination via two-way video, the ENT doctor can diagnose and develop a treatment plan. Telemedicine can sometimes include medicine as complicated as surgery.
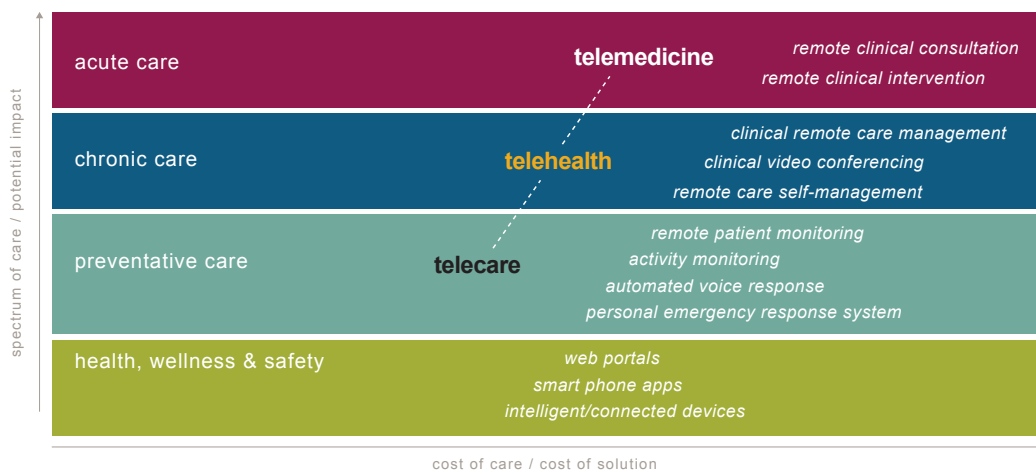
The Results are Clear

Most healthcare experts agree that efficiently extending care into the home is one potential solution to addressing the enormous burden associated with exploding medical costs, including the expenses resulting from hospital readmissions and avoidable emergency care. A recent study has demonstrated the benefits of a remote care management program.

St. Vincent Health*, part of Ascension Health and Indiana's largest healthcare systems, serving 47 counties in central and southern Indiana, reduced hospital readmissions by up to 75% compared to a control group and to the national average. As part of an innovative research study, St. Vincent implemented a remote care management program and selected the Intel-GE Care Innovations™ remote care management solution platform to facilitate care delivered in the home. St. Vincent worked with Intel-GE Care Innovations™ to develop clinical protocols and educational materials to help better manage their population. Upon discharge, patients with a primary diagnosis of CHF or COPD were supported at home by a nurse via the Care Innovations™ remote care management solution solution.[2]

Remote Care Management Spans Spectrum of Care Acuity

spectrum of care / potential impact		
acute care	telemedicine	remote clinical consultation / remote clinical intervention
chronic care	telehealth	clinical remote care management / clinical video conferencing / remote care self-management
preventative care	telecare	remote patient monitoring / activity monitoring / automated voice response / personal emergency response system
health, wellness & safety		web portals / smart phone apps / intelligent/connected devices

cost of care / cost of solution

The Role of External Resources

Along with internal leads, external supplier leads are a critical part of the project team and to the success of a remote care management program. A clinical specialist can help match product features to the specific needs of the clinical staff, including assessing workflow and training. A technical support engineer can assist the IT leads. And if the program is large enough, a supplier program manager can help with the many internal logistics needed to keep things on track.

Finally, rolling out the technology to a patient population can also exceed your organization's resources. If your company has the processes and procedures in place to handle equipment delivery, then utilizing internal resources may be best. If your organization doesn't have that capability, an outsourcing strategy may be appropriate. Regardless, allocating the additional resources required is a critical contributor for success.

A Proven Solution

With a clear strategy, a strong project team and vendor support, a well-planned remote care management program can help address the need to efficiently improve the management of chronic conditions and reduce high cost medical expenses, especially in the aging and chronically ill populations.

Creating an Effective Remote Care Management Program

The correct planning and implementation of a remote care management program is key to maximizing capabilities and seeing meaningful results. Following these four phases will lead to a successful remote care management program:

1 Assess
Gather information to assess organizational clinical workflow readiness and technical readiness. This facilitates the deployment of the right technology to the right population and enables reengineering the approach to care in a way that improves quality care and reduces costs.

2 Plan
Identify the appropriate constituents within your organization to plan a customized implementation with realistic and achievable goals. Technology needs to be integrated into process redesign from the ground up in a way that produces new and improved care delivery models, processes, relationships and interactions. Improving quality care and reducing costs can be achieved by focusing on the workflow and the people, rather than the technology.

3 Deploy & Monitor
Disciplined execution is essential to success. Launch the program only after completing preparation tasks, including finalizing workflow changes, developing clinical care models, and training appropriate staff. Remote care management programs are new to many people and require people to work and think differently, so putting in place strong advocates can be the difference between success and failure. Also, consider the scale of deployment very carefully. Small deployments create more work and may not be big enough to create real efficiencies compared to large-scale deployments where the new model is adopted throughout the organization.

4 Grow & Maintain
Clearly identifying metrics in advance of implementation will help assess whether or not the program is producing the desired results. If results are trending in the right direction, then a "ramp up plan" could be the next step. If the trends show otherwise, a reassessment and course correction may be needed in order to achieve desired results.

For More Information

Learn how Intel-GE Care Innovations™ can help your company implement an effective remote care management (RCM) plan that produces value for everyone.

Visit careinnovations.com to see an online overview of our remote care management platform.

References Consulted

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