How to Use Technology to Improve Triage Efficiency: The Experience of Tidewell Hospice

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Objectives

- Describe the importance of hospice triage programs
- Identify the staffing challenges faced by hospice triage programs
- Explain how Tidewell Hospice uses technology to dispatch a triage team
Tidewell Hospice Triage

- Is triage scheduling an Achilles Heel?
- Is response time after hours a patient dissatisfier?
- Is there an ability to track the times staff are in high or low demand?
- Is there an awareness of the types of calls that come in after hours?
- Is there an opportunity to meet staff, patient, family, and administrative demands?

Geographics of Tidewell Hospice

- Florida ‘Certificate Of Need’ state
- Exclusive hospice provider for counties of:
  - Sarasota
  - Manatee
  - Charlotte
  - DeSoto
- Service area 2600+ sq. miles

2013 demographics
Facts About Tidewell Hospice

- 501(c)3 non-profit agency
- Founded in 1980
- Average daily census 1,050+
- Serving 8,000+ patients annually
- Care provided at any location: homes, ALF, LTC, hospitals or one of 7 freestanding Hospice Houses and 1 inpatient facility (hospital)

2013 demographics

Origination of Triage

The term triage may have originated during the Napoleonic Wars

*The Battle of Austerlitz*, François Gérard, [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
The History of Triage

- Origin from the French "trier," in 1792
- Management of casualties in warfare
- Victims divided into three categories
  - Likely to live, regardless of care
  - Likely to die, regardless of care
  - Immediate care might make a positive difference in patient outcome

Modern Day Triage

- "The sorting of patients according to the urgency of their need for care"
- A dynamic process. A patient’s status can change quickly
- As medical technology has advanced, so have modern approaches to triage
Is This How Your Patients Feel?

Or...Is This?
Importance of Tidewell Hospice Triage

- Triage @ Tidewell Hospice is a specific team with specialized skills.
- Triage supports the Tidewell Hospice mission:
  "Helping people live well by providing care, comfort and compassion"
  - Providing 24/7 care
  - Telephone support
  - In-person visits, as needed

Staffing Challenges in Hospice Triage Programs

Fluctuations in demand for services
Staffing Challenges in Hospice Triage Programs

- Understaffing or Overstaffing
- Balancing needs
  - Patients
  - Staff
  - Financial resource

- Lack of predictability for services needed
  - Skin tear
  - Anxiety
  - Fall
  - Pain
  - Shortness of breath
  - Change in condition
  - Death
Staffing Challenges in Hospice Triage Programs

- Rapid response time
  - Geography of service area
  - Travel time
  - Patients call 911 instead of waiting for a nurse

Tidewell Triage Team

Clinical Staffing Services

- CEO
- EVP/CNO
- VP Clinical Staffing Services
- Clinical Director Triage and Crisis Care
- Clinical Director PRN

- Clinical Advisor Monday-Thursday
- Clinical Advisor Friday-Sunday
- (2) Schedulers
- (5) Phone Triage
- (18) FTE RNs
Why Change?

- Service recoveries related to response times
  - Accrediting bodies recognized the challenges
- Inability to track data accurately
- Lack of standardization
- Inefficient communication
  - Multiple phone calls between triage phone screeners and field staff
- Personal safety of nurses at night
- Desire to decrease hospitalizations

TNS

Tidewell Nurse Scheduling mobile application
**Why TNS?**

- Other industries use technology to dispatch and track delivery of services and shipments
  - How can we make technology work for us?
- Worked with outside vendor to develop software
  - Custom developed mobile application utilizing GPS technology
  - Functionality specific to Tidewell’s needs

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**Tracking Triage Patients and Nurses Before TNS**
Before TNS

Triage Desk
Real-time Location Tracking

Satellite View

- = Patient's Home
- = Available Nurse
- = Nurse With Patient

Map Views
Dispatching a New Call

New Call

- Patient ID: 12345678
- Name: John Doe
- Address: 123 Main St
- City: San Francisco
- State: CA
- Zip: 12345

Nurse: Unassigned
Status: Needs Visit

Save

Consolidated Assignment View

Tidewell Nurse Scheduling System

- Name: John Smith
  - Location: 123 Main St
  - Reason: Change in condition

- Name: Jane Doe
  - Location: 456 Market St
  - Reason: Discharged

- Name: Mike Johnson
  - Location: 789 Broadway
  - Reason: Rescheduled

- Name: Lisa Brown
  - Location: 1011110th Ave
  - Reason: New Patient

- Name: David Lee
  - Location: 22222nd St
  - Reason: Referral

- Name: Emily Davis
  - Location: 33333rd St
  - Reason: Transfer
TNS Nurse View

- Android based mobile app
- All triage RNs have a Tidewell-issued Smartphone

Field Nurse Status Screen

- Nurse can notify phone triage of availability
  - Decrease calls to and from nurse and phone triage
Nurse Visit List

- Patients scheduled for a visit
  - Address
  - Reason for visit
- Nurse has ability to acknowledge
  - Automatic message to phone triage

En Route
Arrival to Patient
Outcomes

- Decreased mileage expenses
- Improved efficiency and communication
- Fewer calls between field and phone staff
- Increased time for phone support to patients
- Fact based decision making through the use of technology
- Provide directions to nurses using GPS maps
- Improved staff satisfaction as evidenced by annual stay interviews

Outcomes

- Automated reports daily and monthly
- Identified trends related to visits:
  - Day of week
  - Types of visits
  - Length of visits
- Adjusted staffing based on trends
- Decreased service recoveries related to response times by 62% from last fiscal year without an increase in workforce
Continued Challenges

- Consistent use of the system by nurses
  - PRNs
  - Correct nurse status
- GPS isn’t always 100% accurate
- Can’t prevent all service delays
  - Always have the “human aspect”
- As with any technology, it shouldn’t replace actual conversation
- Holiday coverage
- Hospitalizations

It’s QUESTION TIME!!
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