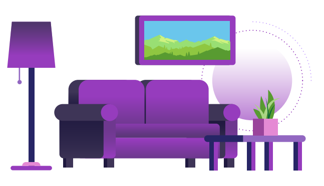
Live Long and Prosper

How CRM is opening Senior Care to New Frontiers

EXPLORE

INTRODUCTION



The growth of the aging population is accelerating–and so are their healthcare demands.

It's no secret that the elderly population in the United States is growing rapidly. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, America's 65+ population is projected to nearly double over the next three decades, from 48 million to 88 million by 2050.[1]

Not only is the population growing, but care is becoming more complex. As people are living longer, they are more at risk of chronic diseases, which accumulate over time. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 4 Americans suffer from multiple chronic diseases. Among Americans ages 65+, this number increases to 3 in 4, with conditions like dementia and Alzheimer's among the biggest concerns.[2]

The changing landscape is clear: The demand for senior care is increasing with no signs of slowing down, generating a higher demand for assisted living, home health, and residential care services than ever before. This is creating challenges in the aging care sector–but is also providing new opportunities for industry growth and efficiency.

The Business of Delivering Aging Care is Changing

With the growing demand, the market for services is expanding. New entrants and disruptors like those in the Aging 2.0 community (with notable startups including Honor, Hometeam Care, and HomeHero) are bringing together entrepreneurs and technologists to solve problems in elder care. Considering the vast size of the market, it's no surprise there are so many entrants. In fact, Grand Review Research reports that the global geriatric care services market is expected to reach $1,012.02 billion by 2022, growing at a CAGR of 6.1% over the forecast period.[3]

However, aging care organizations must be aware of changes that will impact margins. For instance, home health agencies are at the mercy of Medicare reimbursement changes. And while assisted living facilities rely more on private funds, many Americans haven't even started thinking about paying for post-retirement care. In fact, only 35% have set aside money for that purpose, according to the American Society on Aging.[4]

Although the challenges are different between home health and assisted living facilities, these organizations are increasingly diversifying the services they're offering, from assisted living all the way through to skilled nursing and memory care.

For example, decreased reimbursement for skilled nursing may lead some traditionally skilled nursing organizations to also move into the home care space. Meanwhile, those offering both services may also invest in assisted living to create a system of services to enable elderly patients to progress through more complex services over time, which would increase the need for internal lead-passing.

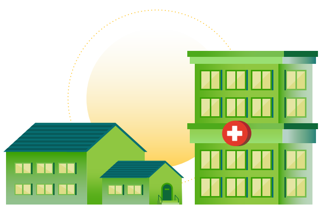
Opportunities for Innovation

As senior care services become more robust in organizations and communities across the country, providers in this space have a unique opportunity to own the whole of a senior's care–progressing to more complex services as they age. Coordinating care and building loyalty becomes more important and in effect, easier, if you have the right tools to holistically manage a senior's care.

So, whether you're a home health agency, a long-term care facility, or considering offering multiple services. Here are three major trends shaking up the industry–and how you can leverage technology to stay ahead of them.

CHAPTER ONE

Trend 1: Pressure To Maintain A Strong Referral Network



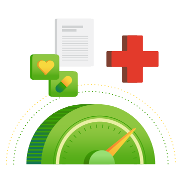
As the industry moves closer toward value-based care, more health systems will look to collaborate with assisted living facilities and home health care organizations, sharing both risk and revenue. The changing regulatory landscape has provided new incentives to lower hospital readmission rates, driving hospitals and senior care providers to work together to achieve the same goals.

With the Hospital Readmissions Reductions Program (HRRP) putting pressure on hospitals to keep readmissions low and the Comprehensive Care Joint Replacement (CCJR) model encouraging hospitals to bundle fees for treatment and post-discharge care, building a strong referral network is more important than ever.

Close relationships with referring health systems may also benefit senior care organizations in the future. Some say the future of healthcare systems is in accountable care organizations (ACOs)–groups of doctors, hospitals, and other healthcare providers who coordinate to provide high-quality care to Medicare patients–and their movement from fee-for-service to fee-for-value based models. As more comprehensive client service relies on networks of care providers, the senior care community will become increasingly integral. Although ACOs have not yet expanded to include senior care, it's only a matter of time until they do.

Shifting to value-based healthcare continues to drive the industry toward more transparency, emphasizing patient communication and feedback like the 5-star performance rating system. This empowers your patients to seek their best care fits at the outset by giving them tools to research and make educated decisions about where they want care. This shift to quality of care–versus quantity of care–makes managing your brand's perception and differentiation more important than ever.

Although the shift to value may not immediately affect every senior care provider, health systems remain a top referrer for senior care. As such, maintaining close relationships to referring hospital systems is critical to growing your businesses and positioning it for success.



Organizations must optimize their marketing and referral processes to maintain close relationships with referring hospital systems.

In order to capitalize on the shifting industry, senior care providers must be able to track and follow up on leads gathered from the referring health system. Using a customer relationship management software (CRM) and automating steps, such as residence insurance verification, can speed up the path from lead to patient. By ensuring marketing and electronic health record systems are integrated, leads are less likely to fall through the cracks.

But lead volume doesn't always equate to incoming patients. First, you must ensure you have the right leads–that is, qualified patients who need your services. Access to data that provides a full picture of your referral volume is key, as well as identifying those that are qualified and accepted versus those that are not. Furthermore, you also need the capabilities to report your organization's successes back to the health system to prove that you're worthy of referral.

The move toward holistic senior care is necessary and will create more competition and emphasis on a value-based health system. Improving your lead collection and qualification abilities will be vital to driving your senior care organization forward.

CHAPTER TWO

Trend 2: Enhanced Coordination For Complex Care

Despite the complexities involved in caring for the aging population, the good news is that better coordination can lead to big improvements. Those who rise to the challenge will reap the rewards.

You're not alone in the effort. In fact, an Aging 2.0 study reveals that 85% of surveyed senior care providers listed care coordination as an area of high priority for innovation–which means new approaches are in the works and at the forefront of this market's changes.[5]

Personalized Care Leads to Results

Effective care coordination and management keeps patients and their families at the center of the system. Patients are often dealing with multiple conditions and will have a large, extended care team and multiple health instructions. Without a personalized and holistic approach, patients and families can be overwhelmed with conflicting information.

While only 15% of Medicare recipients require long-term services, these account for an overwhelming 33% of Medicare spending, according to Georgetown University research.[6] These patients thrive best with individualized care plans. In fact, 64% of those surveyed said individual care plans have helped extensively. This shows that personalized care is key to patient satisfaction. To be truly effective, holistic care must address these interrelated needs all together.

Survey results show that having a single care manager is effective. An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research study reveals that the vast majority of patients under a single care manager generally felt the streamlined approach improved their care (52%, improved a lot; 29%, improved a little).[7] But we all know it isn't scalable. To be most effective, your entire care team must be able to productively scale resources across these complex patient populations to make collaboration easy.

Use Your Care Professionals' Time Wisely

Of course, effective care coordination and management is easier said than done. Many agencies lack the time and resources to implement the tools to support this kind of collaboration. Simply tracking patient data in a binder isn't enough; caregivers need patient-centered solutions to help you coordinate the necessary care.

Compassionately providing care to people with chronic needs is challenging, especially while also frequently addressing administrative duties along the way. The task load alone can be daunting. Today's caregivers must navigate siloed applications, electronic health records, and multiple additional sources of information. And you need to be able to do all this quickly and accurately to understand the complete patient story to make swift, effective decisions for each patient you see.

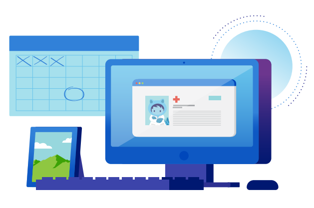
Not to mention, it's also a 24/7 service. To handle the workload and consistently provide quality care, more and more, caregivers need to be able to team up to consolidate efforts. Doing so takes clear and concise, real-time communication. To keep care coordination effective and patient-centered, you need the right tools to help along the way.

Streamline the administrative process using CRM to make it easier to accomplish across teams. Track patient data needs and milestones for recovery success. Leverage evidence-based care plans to create efficient and consistent cross-provider care. And make the tech available across mobile devices so care providers can access additional support from patients' bedsides or in-home.

Automation is the key to making sure administrative tasks run smoothly and scale effectively, without anything important falling through the cracks. By enabling your extended care teams to let go of unnecessary administrative work that doesn't require their expertise, they'll be able to increase their ability to take on more patients and spend more time delivering better care.

CHAPTER THREE

Trend 3: Increasingly Important Patient And Family Engagement



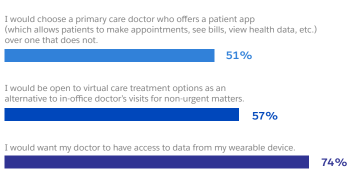
In a thriving technological world, it's no surprise that the senior care industry is adopting technological advancements to improve patient care. Organizations may dismiss digital patient engagement, assuming seniors aren't comfortable with technology, but data suggests they're more adept than the stereotype seems.

Pew Research shows that more than half (59%) of the 65+ population are active internet users,[8] and Accenture survey respondents named health information as their main reason for going online at all.[9]

If today's seniors are more technically inclined than we think, then it's especially true for the seniors of tomorrow who will have lived most of their adult lives in the age of the internet. Given that their technological needs are different from today's elderly patients, you need to start building your capacity to engage through these digital mediums.

Already accustomed to using technology on a regular basis, the growing senior population is interested in applying tech advancements to their healthcare needs as well. Opportunities for better engaging patients and family members in their health management abound: from electronic health records and personalized web portals to virtual care treatment and wearable, data-tracking devices.

Connected Patient Care Preferences Among Baby Boomers[10]



Source: "2016 Connected Patient Report," 2016, Salesforce

Help Patients and Loved Ones Keep Tabs on Their Health

For many families, the decision to entrust the care of their parents or other elderly loved ones can be incredibly difficult. As more millennials become caregivers for their parents, they will increasingly expect to be able to stay connected with their loved ones through digital means. Embracing technology can help families ease this difficult transition by providing better ways to remain informed of their care.

And the benefits go both ways. As assisted living facility caregivers know, patients' happiness is often linked to their relationships with their family. When facilities focus on balancing advanced care needs, helping residents manage their emotional needs can be put on the backburner. But technology can bridge that gap to deepen relationships and give families a simple and accessible way to stay connected.

Leveraging technology to create strong bonds with families is quickly moving from a perk to an expectation. Give families access to care plans so they can stay involved and up to date–even from a distance. Sharing photos of patients engaged in their favorite activities or sending out weekly schedules are great ways to keep families connected. Providing a digital channel to enable families to keep track of their loved ones' activities, health, and wellbeing can be a game changer in your care strategy's success.

Make it even simpler to view this information by providing mobile access. The more easily you can give families the peace of mind that their loved ones are safe and cared for, the smoother your operations will be.

CONCLUSION

The Salesforce Advantage

As the demand for senior care increases, needs become more complex, business models change, and disruptors enter the market, turning to technology can be the strategic move your organization needs.

In this changing healthcare landscape, Salesforce is ready and able to help you meet rising senior care demands head-on. We're helping providers of all sizes concentrate on what matters most: delivering better care. And we'll take care of the rest.

Amidst pressures to maintain a strong referral network, enhance care coordination, and build stronger patient and familial commitment, a unified platform can scale your patient engagement and take your capabilities to the next level. By leveraging the Salesforce platform, you can stay on top of these trends to take advantage of growing demand and create opportunities to stay ahead of the competition.

Make Your Tech Work for You

With three feature updates every year, even the smallest-scale provider facilities can take advantage of the latest in next-generation health IT. Give your patients the service they deserve and your teams the tools they need to make this happen.

Remember:

1. Binders and faxes simply won't get the job done in this growing industry. Your care team needs tools to help them collaborate and be more productive.
2. Leveraging technology to engage with patients and families is no longer a perk–it's a requirement.
3. Extending your services and maintaining close relationships with referrers will help senior care providers grow today and into the future.

Want to learn more about Salesforce solutions for senior care providers? Let's talk.

Sources

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