Make Them Stay: 3 Ways to Keep Residents from Leaving

By Susan Saldibar

Few would argue about the importance of data and technology in senior living communities. My last article, in conjunction with the folks at PointClickCare (a Senior Housing Forum partner), covered the revenue side of the house and how data and technology helps capture billable events and improve accuracy of billing.

Clients of PointClickCare, as well as subject matter experts, have also talked about the use of data and technology to enrich the day to day lives of residents and provide peace of mind to their families. So it seemed like a good idea to cover the "people" side of data and technology as well. And it's particularly relevant as we head into a year that will continue to press senior care providers to improve the quality of life for their residents.

As we dive into 2018, here are three key benefits of data and technology that could positively impact your residents in the new year (courtesy of subject matter experts and clients who use the PointClickCare EHR and eMAR solutions):

1. **More resident "face time"** -- When the care staff has to move back and forth from the point-of-care to a terminal to log in their care and observations, valuable time is lost. Spring Hills Senior Communities' Senior Vice President of Operations, Elena Ortiz, and Vice President of Resident Services and Program Development, Lesa Scott have used Point-Click-Care's Point of Care technology to provide a convenient on-the-spot method for nurses and caregivers to enter notes and obtain status updates without leaving the resident area. "Nurses and caregivers are now steps away from a convenient kiosk for entering information and checking statuses," Elena told us. "They no longer need to leave the resident area to log on to the computer in the wellness center."

2. **Greater accuracy in accounting for services and care provided** -- When information isn't logged in properly, items fall through the cracks. For Spring Hills, by using PointClickCare's EHR to track the results of programs for falls prevention has helped them to better document and generate alerts. And it has translated to a decrease in falls for almost all of their communities. As for those communities still lagging behind, they were able to identify where the issues were. They could then adjust and track improvement. Amazingly, the visibility over the performance of each community and oversight resulted in reaching the goal of 50% less hospitalization!

3. **Better communication with family members** -- A good example of this was given recently by Heidi Elliott, VP of Operations, Independent Living, Assisted Living & Home Health for Welcov Healthcare. When a family member calls and asks about a loved one's care, a staff member, in this case using PointClickCare's EHR platform, can quickly go in and review details about that resident. They are able to answer on-the-spot questions like "Did she have a good experience at lunch?"

   Assessments and re-assessments are easier to accomplish as well, with the ability to log in data and update easily. Of course, sometimes that re-assessment results in the need for additional personal services, which, subsequently means a pricing increase. Anyone who has been through these conversations with residents knows that news of a price increase can result in move-outs or, at the very least, disgruntled residents. But not so for Welcov. "We had 530 conversations with residents and families about pricing changes," says Heidi. "And not one resident left our care as a result of them." What made it easier, according to Heidi, is that they had documented evidence. And, they had the data to back it up. So the residents and their families understood and accepted the price changes. Wow. How often does that happen?

Or course we can expect more from data and technology as the consumer-driven push towards providing residents with a greater quality of life continues.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the capabilities of data and enabling technology better than this quote from Rebecca Wolf, Executive Director for Welcov Healthcare. She was responding to a question about the value of having mobile access to data, "The best way to answer your question is to relate a recent situation in which one of our residents had a fall. The nurse, using her notebook, immediately notified the doctor, informed family members, and recorded the vitals of the resident. All online. She instantly accessed the necessary documents and had them ready to print out. All before the ambulance arrived!" And, she went on to add, "When doctors see this level of efficiency in action, they are impressed. And they are more likely to recommend Welcov, based on what they see."

Now that's what technology should be doing!

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