



Not One Every Talks About The Family and Technology, But They Should

By Meg LaPorte

There is little doubt that advances in technologies that help older adults maintain their independence is a good thing for everyone involved, especially the beneficiaries and their caregivers. And for smart senior living providers, innovations such as remote sensors, GPS, and mobile devices have been extremely beneficial for residents and staff alike as well.

Long term and post-acute care providers have embraced solutions with gusto in an effort to stay competitive in the market by leveraging innovations that improve resident care, reduce staff turnover, and minimize paperwork and regulatory burden, among other things. One thing that is sometimes overlooked among the possible benefits of technology, however, is family engagement.

Family Buy in Makes the Difference

As a key driver in improving resident quality of life and quality of care, getting families to become and stay engagement with their loved ones' care means the difference between a resident (and their family) having a good experience versus a great experience in a skilled nursing, assisted living, or other setting.

[LifeShare Technologies](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, is one of those innovators that gets family engagement. The company's solutions enable residents to stay connected via email, social media, text messaging, pictures, and videos using their existing TV and a remote control. LifeShare's mobile app is the game changer that gives family members the ability to see nearly everything their relative sees on a daily basis, from activities calendars to the daily menus.

According to Becky Wolf, executive director of Welcov Assisted Living at Alta, in Alta, Iowa, the mobile app is not only a value added for family members but also is a marketing tool for the community. "The really cool thing about the LifeShare app is that families can download it for free and they can see what we're doing for the day," she says. "They literally have all that information at their fingertips."

An App for That

Wolf notes that the app is designed to resolve any HIPAA issues that may come up with regard to residents. "What's nice is that family members can download pics of their loved ones and print them out themselves."

Since implementing the LifeShare solution and the app at Alta, Wolf says she has learned that family members use the app to review events and menus as a way to decide when to join their parent for the day or evening. "We also have a small dementia unit where one family likes the app because if there is something they know their parent will like they will come get them and take them to it," she says.

Convenient One-Time Input

At the back end, the app is conveniently and easily updated by way of the Internet. "It's all very timesaving because we only have to put menus and activities into the system once. Before, we had it on a sheet, we had on the table, and we had to hand them out," she says. "Now, we just have to print everything once because the program will take all the information and put into a document for us. We can choose whether we want it daily, weekly, or monthly."

Wolf reports that she and another Iowa assisted living community are fully up and running with LifeShare, while the Welcov company is working to implement it across the board in the future.



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