

Covenant HomeCare Boosts Clinical Efficiency with New Agency Management System

At a Glance

Organization

Covenant HomeCare
Knoxville, Tenn.

- 86,416 visits in 2005
- 17,500 billable hospice days in 2005
- Services include: skilled nursing, rehabilitation services, medical social services, mental health services and hospice care

Solution Spotlight

- Horizon Homecare

Critical Issues

- Overcome staff IT resistance created by unsuccessful implementation of another vendor's system
- Improve regulatory compliance
- Increase clinical productivity

Results

- Improved patient care productivity from 71.1% to 81.7%
- Achieved 100% compliance for assigned visit orders
- Missed visits reduced from 205 to 17
- Improved supervisory visit compliance from 76% to 99%
- Reduced delayed reimbursements by 85%
- Decreased unnecessary SCICs by 80%, saving \$340,000
- Improved physician order turnaround by 44%
- Saved \$31,000 and 9,800 miles per pay period

Profile

Covenant HomeCare is a primary member of Covenant Health, an integrated healthcare system headquartered in Knoxville, Tenn. The company's three branch offices provide comprehensive homecare to the communities it serves. In 2005, Covenant logged 86,416 visits and provided 17,510 billable hospice days.

Challenges

Leadership at Covenant HomeCare wanted to realize the business benefits of a homecare information system despite previously adopting a system that failed to meet its needs. Besides finding the right solution, Covenant had to overcome the clinical staff's resistance to a new system. According to John Huskey, Covenant's vice president and CEO of HomeCare, "When Covenant initially automated point-of-care documentation, the IT system was unsuccessful and even disruptive."

Answers

Covenant looked to McKesson for a solution that would overcome internal resistance and streamline processes. According to Huskey, Covenant already had a strong relationship with McKesson: "McKesson brought something to the table no other IT provider could — a proven track record with Covenant and a product, Horizon Homecare™, that not

only met our needs but was compatible with the rest of our network systems." Covenant found in Horizon Homecare a system to help improve compliance, financial viability and clinical efficiency.

Covenant implemented Horizon Homecare in 2003. To foster staff buy-in, Covenant leadership formed an implementation team and designed all processes with end users' input. For each focus area, a McKesson implementation team member involved small groups of end-users to review processes. "We consulted the Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP) and CMS on processes as well, because integrity of the medical record was absolutely not to be compromised," explains Huskey.

Covenant saw improvements immediately. At go-live, Covenant had an average of \$175,000 in delayed reimbursements due to untimely creation of 485s, authorizations and other required payor documentation. Horizon Homecare automatically created all forms as a by-product of clinical documentation. This improved the agency's production of 485s, authorizations and payor documentation and reduced delayed reimbursements by 88%.

Horizon Homecare's customizable reports helped Covenant identify issues that led to billing holdups and pinpoint which department,

Case Study

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John Huskey

*Vice President and CEO
of HomeCare,
Covenant HomeCare*

supervisor or staff member needed to correct the error. Covenant designed a late order hot list that showed which orders were delaying billing, along with the dollar amount on hold to emphasize the urgency of obtaining needed signatures.

Covenant gained mastery over scheduling. A multidisciplinary team used historical data to plot patient volumes by ZIP code and determine the staff needed in each area by discipline. With Horizon Homecare's scheduling functionality, Covenant assigned visits based on geographic area — reducing drive time and improving clinical productivity.

With Horizon Homecare's single-database design, Covenant also began scheduling visits by discipline rather than by branch. Huskey says coverage across branches and visit frequencies improved. According to Huskey, "Horizon Homecare's scheduling functionality helped ensure visit frequencies were not missed due to paper schedule error." He explains that the system helped standardize visit time intervals so that time allocated for visits was accurate and staff could complete their work in the expected period.

Other changes to Covenant's scheduling included a centralized triage department that handled calls placed to each office 24x7.

This decreased staff interruptions and increased productivity.

Covenant also benefited from Horizon Homecare's HL7 interface, which made it easy for clinical staff to receive patient demographic information across the continuum of care. Cut and paste features were utilized with portal systems so each clinician had the patient's history information and could preplan visits more effectively.

Results

Customer satisfaction scores rose significantly after implementation. Covenant received the Four Star Customer Service Award for Overall Quality by Professional Research Consultants, which is awarded based on the percent of patients who rated the hospital "excellent" for Overall Quality of Care. It also received the Best Practice Award from Covenant Health System for scoring at or above the 100th percentile for "overall teamwork between Homecare staff." A local newspaper awarded Covenant its Reader's Choice Award for Best Home Health 2005.

"That's where the real benefit of implementing Horizon Homecare has come," says Huskey. "Yes, we saved time and improved processes, but the fact that our patients are so happy is really what made it worthwhile."

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