VNA Home Health Hospice utilizes Honeywell’s LifeStream™ View to streamline patient care between physicians and home healthcare agency

VNA Home Health Hospice in South Portland, Maine, currently uses Honeywell's Genesis DM and Genesis Touch remote patient monitoring devices to communicate with and engage moderate to high-risk patients, for both post-acute and hospice conditions. Since first implementing their telehealth program in 2007, the combination of monitoring devices and Honeywell’s clinical software – LifeStream™ Management Suite – has allowed them to consolidate and track patient data. And recently, they’ve proactively improved physician engagement by providing them with direct access to monitor and track patients’ health as well, thereby expanding care oversight for patients.

“Giving physicians access to the patient data we were collecting through our telehealth program has helped us improve not only physician engagement, but patient care coordination as well.”
- Leigh Ann Howard RN, MSN
Manager of Clinical Specialty Services
VNA Home Health Hospice

When home care providers at VNA Home Health Hospice (VNA) looked at ways to improve their already-successful telehealth program, they realized patient care could be improved by giving physicians the ability to monitor their patients’ health status, using VNA’s existing telehealth system.

The reasoning behind the initiative was the desire to form a broader “circle of care” around each patient by improving overall care coordination through the engagement of the patient’s physicians – ensuring everyone involved in the patient's care plan could track and monitor the daily vital signs of patients from one clinical dashboard, available through Honeywell's LifeStream™ View.

One of Honeywell's five LifeStream Management Suite software applications, LifeStream View provides secure access to patient information via the Internet, allowing healthcare providers (as well as patients and their family members) to access patient health status at any time; from anywhere they have an internet connection. LifeStream View also gives home care clinicians the ability to set up reports for physicians to view which provide graphical data and trends of the overall health status of individual patients.

The engagement of physicians post-discharge has been well-documented as a main factor in reducing hospital readmissions. In fact, according to the California HealthCare Foundation, when patients interacted with their physicians within seven days of hospital discharge, readmission rates dropped from more than 14 percent to less than 6 percent.
Improving the Process for Care Delivery

To streamline the patient care plan process while also engaging physicians in patient care only when absolutely necessary, VNA staff worked with physicians following the patient’s hospital discharge to create standing orders for care, which specified basic trouble-shooting measures to be implemented proactively in response to changes in patient vitals.

For example, if a patient’s weight increases from one day to the next, the home health agency follows a protocol set by the physicians to provide a double dose of diuretics – all then noted in the patient record for the physician to see the next time he or she logs on to LifeStream View to check on patient status.

The standing orders (or protocols) – created in conjunction with VNA’s partnering physicians – ensure patient physicians are only directly contacted by VNA staff when required. This frees up the physician’s time to deal with more critical patients during office hours.

“Following the established protocols has allowed us to routinely keep our patients out of the hospitals – sometimes multiple times – with less time and paperwork passing between VNA and physicians’ offices,” said Leigh Ann Howard RN, MSN, Manager of Clinical Specialty Services, VNA Home Health Hospice.

Extended Patient Oversight

To complement the standing orders, physicians were given access to the patient historical graphs and current status via LifeStream View, allowing them to access reports created by VNA nursing staff, which could include the full patient record, medication documentation, and a full trending of patient vital signs as collected throughout the day. Any protocols that have been followed are also available within the record, along with results.

“Many of our partnering physicians really like this easy-to-use method of checking in on their patients whenever they have the time – first thing in the morning, over a lunch break, or even before they go to bed at night,” said Ms. Howard.

In addition to the protocols set for patients in post-acute care settings, VNA is looking at changing protocols to optimize hospice environments, designed around creating comfort for the patient.

Increased Efficiency and Communication

According to executives at VNA, the most significant additional benefit of the telehealth partnership with physicians has been an increase in staff efficiency – including a major reduction in paperwork and the time related to it.

“When we implemented the system of physician standing orders and gave physicians access to the patient records through LifeStream View, we quickly realized we’d put an end to almost 90 percent of our paperwork. A key area of success was that faxing was no longer required,” noted Ms. Howard.

By reducing the time and paperwork necessary for physicians to interact with and track patient data, VNA has streamlined overall care coordination for their patients, as all pertinent information around the patient’s care plan and health status is seamlessly shared among all of the healthcare providers in the care continuum.

VNA also plans to involve patients’ family members in the future, by providing them with access to patient information through LifeStream View.

“We know we’ll be able to continue expanding our circle of care for patients with the telehealth program we have in place,” concluded Ms. Howard. “And that provides our agency with a key benefit we can offer our patients, now and in the future.”

VNA Home Health Hospice – Agency at a Glance

Founded in 1921 as a public health nursing service by the Red Cross and the City of South Portland, VNA Home Health Hospice carries on the tradition of providing exceptional, innovative, and personal care to people in their homes. Affiliated with Maine’s Mercy Hospital, the mission of VNA Home Health Hospice is to provide clinically excellent, compassionate home health and hospice care to individuals and families.

VNA Home Health Hospice is a non-profit organization dedicated to the health and well-being of the local community – it provides numerous wellness programs including flu clinics, corporate clinics, immunization clinics and other volunteer services.

VNA Home Health Hospice has been recognized as one of the Home Care Elite for five of the last six years. This designation is based on quality of care, quality improvement and financial performance.

VNA Home Health Hospice is Medicare certified and accredited by the Joint Commission.