



Playing by the New Rules of Readmission

How the contact center helps hospitals and CMS plans lower readmission rates and improve care

The Washington Post recently [reported](#) that an Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandate which penalizes hospitals for readmitting Medicare and Medicaid patients within 30 days of a previous discharge is having a tangible effect on overall readmission rates, which have fallen by 1.2 percent.

This is particularly important when considered in the context of a second [report](#) from InformationWeek, detailing Harvard School of Public Health professor Ashish Jha's contention that lower readmission figures do not necessarily correlate with better quality of care or more positive outcomes.

Both articles realize that the new readmittance rule is streamlining a burdened part of the healthcare system while simultaneously prompting the industry to act on the importance of care continuing beyond when the hospital bracelet is removed.

CMS plans and hospitals need efficient, cost-effective options to manage patient follow-up and continuing care after a hospital visit. Methods may include outpatient clinic care, paramedic visits — or perhaps most compellingly — phone follow-up.

The affordability and personal touch of telephonic communication should not be understated in this instance. However, stakeholders need to be aware of a high bar should they consider selecting a contact center partner to follow-up with patients after they leave the hospital:

- **Considerable Healthcare Experience** – it is imperative that a contact center charged with following up with patients have significant experience navigating other CMS programs, as well as the professionalism and staff necessary to handle each interaction knowledgeably and responsibly.
- **A Strong Commitment to Compliance** – in a situation where regulations are subject to constant redevelopment and interpretation, contact centers operating in the healthcare space must be able to nimbly adapt to and comply with all regulatory oversight and have a flawless compliance record.
- **Agent Quality and Professionalism** – agents are at the heart of any telephonic outreach effort. A contact center involved in an effort to lower readmittance rates and improve outcomes needs to be staffed with talented, knowledgeable and licensed individuals where applicable.

As new elements of the ACA quickly come into play throughout 2013, stakeholders that begin to roll out compliance processes early will enjoy significant advantages in the future. Finding a patient follow-up method that works – and considering a contact center as a particularly efficient and effective option – should be a significant part of the ramp up.