



An Efficient Post-Hospital Follow-Up Process Will Help to Reduce Patient Readmission Rates

A key aim of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is to reduce hospital readmission rates for Medicare and Medicaid patients. Under current CMS requirements, hospitals with excessive readmissions will be fined up to 3% by fiscal 2015. The challenge is so great that even Congress has become concerned, and [recently introduced](#) a bill to adjust penalties for hospitals serving impoverished communities.

Further, according to [Gallup](#), over half of the newly insured have gained insurance through state exchanges since the passage of the ACA, and these individuals report being less healthy than average U.S. adults. Along with this injection of less healthy people into the healthcare system, there has been an increase in emergency room visits.

To address readmission, CMS plans and hospitals must utilize a variety of tactics to enhance their patient follow-up and continuing care after a hospital visit, including outpatient clinic care, paramedic visits and the simple, yet critical, act of phone follow-up.

To enhance the process, hospitals and health plans can use a contact center to conduct follow-up calls with patients or members who were recently in the hospital. Family members and caretakers who play crucial roles in a patient's recovery can also be reached through these telephonic efforts.

This increase in diligent follow-up is one way to help to ensure that patients are complying with their doctors' recommendations, and thereby reduce the likelihood of further complications and repeat admittance, but only if the contact center partner and its agents are top-shelf.

In addition to post-hospital follow-up, outreach can include other initiatives to aid in improving patient health, including wellness programs. Wellness initiatives often involve scheduling appointments for preventative care services such as immunizations, mammograms or colonoscopies. Contact centers can be utilized to help schedule and manage these activities and aid patients in staying in front of many potential health issues.

High-caliber contact center agents who possess professionalism and experience navigating other CMS programs will be able to handle each patient interaction knowledgably and responsibly. It is also important to ensure your contact center partner has a strong commitment to compliance and is able to adhere to all relevant regulatory requirements.

As the healthcare landscape in the U.S. continues to evolve and this emphasis on responsibility for patient care rises, a strong patient outreach program will be an important asset for both hospitals and health plan providers.