



# Empowering Your Frontline Employees to Turn Data Into Decisions

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It's 2020, and skilled nursing staffs are feeling the pinch.

The COVID-19 pandemic is knocking frontline workers in skilled nursing facilities (SNF) out of work. Some are getting sick. Others are reluctant to come to work out of concern for their own wellbeing.

Nurses have always been asked to work harder to compensate for staffing shortages. This global health crisis has dealt new urgency to old problems. SNF providers must do more with less – the sort of challenge that sounds feasible on paper but brings stress to those asked to execute it.

That's where data comes in.

Today, data is at the heart of health care. It drives care decisions, it drives financial decisions. With all of the data available in skilled nursing settings, SNF operators can lean on data to continue improving patient outcomes.

But before skilled providers can act on data, they must first collect it, have systems that allow them to easily access it and then know how to interpret and analyze it. Skilled providers might even have data and not realize it is “data,” underestimating the value of the everyday information their teams collect, such as a patient's vitals or payer requirements.

This white paper offers three steps SNF operators can take to improve the data collection process, revealing how to empower frontline employees to improve care outcomes.





# Collecting the right data

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Operators have data. The question is whether they have the data they need.

There are a few reasons why a SNF might not have the right data. One is that the old data collection process was incomplete compared to today's standards. Another reason is that the high ratio of patient or resident to caregiver limits the amount of time a caregiver can spend collecting vital data. If a caregiver only has five minutes to talk to a patient, they will collect only major datapoints and could miss other important ones.

"We relied on caregivers to decide what is important, and given unlimited time, we would trust that they would be making the right choice. But they are overstretched with the ratios of patients," says Brian Buys, senior director of clinical product management for PointClickCare. "What ends up happening is checking the boxes on the things that are absolutely required from a regulatory perspective, and not going beyond that."

When caregivers lack an efficient bedside data gathering tool, they must delay their data entry, and do so after the bedside engagement. They shorten their processes in an effort to support patients, but their work leads to a variety of inaccurate or imprecise documentation methods — such as sticky notes on notebooks — due to limited recall and sheer volume. This can lead to gaps in information, and if decisions have already been made about the data that is on hand, outcomes are negatively impacted.

"Oftentimes, the root cause of a problem can be traced back to missing information," Buys says. "Sometimes that information is pretty basic in terms of what we needed to know to prevent this."

Valuable yet basic information might include the number of times a patient has been turned or repositioned in bed, or their nutrition status. These types of data are difficult to accurately reproduce en masse at the conclusion of a shift.

"If we haven't collected that ... precise information, then we don't stand in a really good position to prevent problems," he says.





# Transitional and operational impact of lacking data

Al Kinel of Rochester, New York-based consulting firm Strategic Interests is a strategic partner working with many of PointClickCare's customers, and he has come to view these three steps in terms of the operational impact and the transitional impact. Lacking data creates multiple problems.



## TRANSITIONAL IMPACT

Another reason for the lack of data can be the transition from a hospital or other care setting into a SNF, Kinel says. PointClickCare's system works with hospitals and health systems for effective transitions of records, such as getting the Continuity of Care Document (CCD) into the PointClickCare system.



## OPERATIONAL IMPACT

Without the proper data, operational imperatives might fail, thus hampering a SNF's ability to provide proper care to a population, or a given patient.





# A smart system that serves up summarized data

Just because a SNF has all of the data it needs, does not mean the data is easily accessible. And if the data is not easily accessible, it is irrelevant.

“If people had 45 minutes, they could look at all of their data,” Buys says. “But they don’t have 45 minutes to answer the question, ‘How is my father doing?’”

There are two major causes of having data, yet not being able to easily access it. The first is a holdover from the move from paper to electronic systems.

“There was a strong desire to replicate whatever was on paper for that particular organization, or that particular facility within an organization,” Buys says. But that sort of one-for-one translation is inefficient and ineffective. “Our focus now is moving on a much more significant leap forward – and that requires something much different: giving up those custom ways. When you do that, the system can surface information for you.”

The second challenge is change management. Once an organization is entering a new phase of its data collection, everyone in the organization must be in lock step.

“To some degree, messy systems are retained when there is no agreement on an organization system or a standard,” Buys says. “As we bring new tools to the table, many of our customers are leaving behind some of those custom, self-managed tools and moving toward standards. However, this requires significant change.”





# Transitional and operational impact of lacking data

## TRANSITIONAL IMPACT

A patient's transition from a hospital to a SNF comes with that patient's record, but the discrete information within that record might not be readily available.

"And if you don't have those discrete values or lab values, it's hard to see trends," Kinel says.

## OPERATIONAL IMPACT

When data cannot be easily accessed, different departments within a SNF lose their ability to effectively and efficiently communicate in a valuable way about a patient, thus reducing care quality.

A lack of accessible data can also carry legal implications.

"With regards to capturing discrete data as opposed to having a PDF of information that is attached to the record, it's officially in there," Kinel says. "A lawyer would say, 'You had the information.'"

But if it's not at an operator's or nurse's fingertips, it is useless.





# Knowing how to interpret the data, and act upon it

The final pitfall comes down to the one area of data that is truly manmade: human action. There many reasons that a SNF might have accessible, strategic access to the right data, yet still not act on it. Among them are:

- Differences among caregivers. Some caregivers do what is comfortable because they are afraid to make mistakes, while others want to stick with what they know best.
- Complexity of resident needs. With care needs greater as residents manage multiple chronic conditions, SNF operators might feel they don't know how to best execute on the data they have.
- Time management. SNF operators might feel as if they don't have time to find the data that is best.

"We're working on making things actionable right away and calling attention if things haven't been actioned," Buys says.

## Transitional and operational impact of not acting on data



### TRANSITIONAL IMPACT

When patients move across state lines, the data that travels with them might not be obvious to the receiving party, Kinel says. PointClickCare's platform Carequality addresses that challenge by streamlining the sharing of data between health networks and systems.



### OPERATIONAL IMPACT

Operators might fail to act on data as a function of training. SNFs must train staff to identify gaps in performance and to address those gaps. Without that, a SNF might have the data but not know how to utilize it, Kinel says.

# How technology helps prevent data pitfalls

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Collecting, accessing and acting upon data in skilled nursing has never been more valuable – or more essential. As operators sought an edge in PDPM, they moved to have a mastery of this data journey, with technology solutions helping make that happen. Technology can minimize variance between caregivers, surface the most pertinent data for caregivers and synthesize the data to support decision making.

Each of these benefits takes on new significance in a world of a global health crisis.

“The world has changed around all of us,” Buys says. “Technology and innovation is not something that just comes from a vendor. As much or more of the innovation is innovation in how we deliver care. We are in this together, but we as a tech vendor can’t do this alone. We need to work together with people, process and tools to adapt to this new world around us.”





What's your next step to succeed in a new data-centric world?  
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## About PointClickCare

PointClickCare is the leading electronic health record (EHR) technology partner to North America's long-term post-acute care industry. To learn more about how PointClickCare can help your business, visit them at [pointclickcare.com](http://pointclickcare.com).