



How to maintain operational excellence amid a staffing crisis

Travis Palmquist

SVP and General Manager, Senior Care, PointClickCare

The current unprecedented spate of workforce shortages has confounded senior living providers more than anyone could have ever imagined.

A rapidly growing and aging population brings serious challenges to everything from epic demographic shifts and rising chronic conditions to ever-rising healthcare costs.

Senior care providers aided by tech will be able to leverage automation to improve workflow efficiency, ensure consistent care delivery, and ultimately achieve operational excellence.

This is a core message of PointClickCare, one of the industry's preeminent incubators and developers of solutions to challenges that vex so many providers today.

"This is a watershed moment

for long-term care," says Travis Palmquist, a former director of operations of several senior living communities who now serves as PointClickCare's senior vice president and general manager for senior care. "How this industry emerges from this is going to define the future for everyone."

As chaotic as the staffing crisis is, it's also tearing the covers off an emerging dynamic known as value-based care.

"There are pathways to tap into this new world and benefit from it," Palmquist notes. "Really, there is no silver bullet to solving the staffing issue. "And technology can — and will — be a big part of that strategy.

"Senior care organizations today are not evolving if they aren't looking at a VBC strategy," he adds. "Providers today need to be keeping residents out of the hospital and getting reimbursed for the value they're providing,

and there are several paths to making that happen."

Some of Palmquist's observations on other key issues of the day are just as enlightening:

Q: It's no surprise our senior care industry is dealing with staffing upheaval, but what are the factors that have led us here?

A: This staffing situation in our industry is in chaos — and this will be our reality for some time.

A big way to help move the needle and alleviate some of this chaos is ensuring operational excellence — improving quality care, improving automation, and improving the connected care experience.

Thanks to technology innovations, we can make workflows more efficient, automate some time-consuming practices, adjust staffing ratios

and free staff up to spend more time with residents.

Q: As the industry shifts toward a value-based care model, what can senior care providers do to ensure they are successful?

A: Providers need to understand that if they are not digitized, they won't be in a position to provide the confidence and visibility into the pathways and the care they're delivering.

To emphasize: There's no silver-bullet to solving the staffing crisis, but technology is one way to help create efficiencies and do more with less. What we're seeing with VBC is an awesome opportunity to take on risk, but this does require operational excellence. Patient outcomes matter.

Senior care deserves a bigger seat at the VBC table. We're seeing our best customers tap into these new paths to revenue and it's paying dividends.

Q: Is technology truly the answer to these major challenges across our industry?

A: Technology is a workforce multiplier. It plays an absolutely critical role. And is one of the arrows in your quiver.

When it comes to workforce issues, there are two ways to improve your staffing: One is to bring more in through the front door and the other is to slow down those going out the back. The former is very costly and the

latter is more within your control.

You need to grow your staff; you have to educate and remind them of their worth. Engagement and retention are the building blocks. And you need an EHR solution that gives you the proper insights into workflow.

Technology needs to be prioritized, strategized, and incorporated into the vision and plan in order for it to achieve operational excellence. This allows for more informed care, which better informs clinicians to make the right care decisions and feel more valued.

With the right tools and solutions in place you can solve for gaps in nursing staff, automate and standardize content, and provide the data and information that stakeholders require in a more effective way.

Q: How is PointClickCare helping to bridge gaps across the care continuum?

A: Data is a huge component of this connectivity. There are more stakeholders and risk-bearing entities involved in a patient's care than ever before, and they all want data available to them now.

Providers need to be able to optimize technology solutions that allow for a more holistic and integrated approach to healthcare delivery. All of this data gives them the ability to combine automated insight with subjective insight, which can have a significant impact on care.

Q: What is operational excellence and why is this a critical part of solving the staffing crisis?

A: Technology needs to be a key contributor. For senior care providers, the three pillars are: driving quality outcomes, mastering transitions and achieving excellence in financial performance. When we talk about operational excellence, it's about delivering improvements in care delivery. It's a culture and philosophy about how to deliver quality healthcare, and to truly be achieved it needs support from the entire organization.

This new climate is demanding operational excellence in order to stay profitable, maintain compliance, retain and recruit staff and provide quality care. This entails unprecedented efficiencies.

Maintaining operational excellence is critical and technology is a key contributor for this, but it's also a big investment. What needs to change to help the senior care industry succeed?

Deep collaboration. We cannot improve healthcare in the post-acute care space without streamlining workflows, strengthening care delivery, supporting provider well-being, easing staffing and improving resident outcomes. Proper policy and reimbursements will help ensure operational excellence. ■

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