WHY YOUR NURSE TRIAGE NEEDS TO BE INTEGRATED WITH YOUR CLIENTS’ SYSTEMS

By Dr. Ravi Raheja

Healthcare providers are increasingly being asked to show improved patient outcomes through continuity of care. At the same time, there is a demand to decrease cost through better utilization of healthcare dollars. Telephone triage has played an important role in satisfying these demands.

With the increase in number of electronic medical records (EMR) and the push for seamless exchange of information, nurse triage call centers need to have secure, real time, two-way communication between their triage software and multiple client systems. There are several advantages that will soon make complete integration the standard of care. Here are some key advantages:

Real Time Information:

One of the primary reasons for integration is to ensure that all triage documentation reaches the provider automatically and immediately. Integration bypasses the manual steps of faxing the encounter, scanning it, and attaching it to the patient’s record. It also ensures that the information is available to providers in real time.

Access to EMR information:

Practices invest a significant amount of time and money in their EMR. Nurse triage centers should be able to utilize that resource to better help patients. However, it is not practical for a nurse to access every EMR to review the patient call for each caller. Advanced triage software and integration systems allow the triage nurse to review an updated medical summary of the patient from the physician’s EMR in a secure, standardized format.

The implications are significant for triaging chronically ill patients and preventing hospital readmissions. For regular callers, it makes the patient feel as if the nurse on the phone really knows them and that the nurse is working in conjunction with the physician, creating a good relationship. This encourages them to call back and further decreases ER usage.

Data Aggregation:

As individual practices and healthcare organizations are pushed to provide better care while demonstrating lower costs, the reporting capabilities of the triage call centers are going to play a significant role in reimbursement and performance evaluation. Having a fully integrated system provides the ability to aggregate data in a meaningful way and prove outcomes to payers. By using data from the practices and the triage center combined with the appropriate reporting tools built into the system, access to relevant and customized data becomes readily available.

True Continuity of Care:

Once the call center invests in the proper technology, they can help the medical community by securely sharing relevant data with care partners. The medical summary of the patient and triage encounter can be made available to affiliated emergency rooms and other facilities through secure HIPAA compliant portals.

For example, a patient who is seen in the office that day calls after hours triage and is told to go to the emergency room. The ER physician will be able to see relevant data from the office, and the triage nurse will provide more coordinated care. As part of the system, the emergency room visit can also be put back directly into the practice EMR. All of this can be accomplished with completely secure, HIPAA complaint systems.

In summary, by investing in the proper triage and integration technology, the call center can lead the effort to provide coordinated, efficient care and help the community they serve by providing a true medical home for their patients.

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