



CASE STUDY

Mobile Healthcare Solution Yields Better Outcomes

For home and community care, technology will indefinitely continue to shape the future of point of care and compliance. No matter what the next technology will be, the most important return is in the quality of care for clients. The foremost goals in any home healthcare agency that is adding on a technology solution will remain the same: manage costs, improve the quality of care and best possible outcomes and give the patient the care they need within a home care setting.

Founded by Michael and Mary Merrell over 15 years ago in New Mexico, Ambercare is now employee-owned, which means every patient is cared for by an owner. The company strives to elevate home health care standards by employing caregivers who are fulfilling a personal mission: treating each patient and family member as their own. You rarely hear someone who is sick, plead to stay in the hospital. Regardless of condition, anyone would rather be home, in their own bed, in their own surroundings, and with the company of family and friends. But returning to home requires careful attention and exacting care in order to ensure excellent patient recovery.

Support Staff Via Technology

Ambercare needed a solution to support the care staff as much as possible, which included using technology to help make their jobs easier so they could focus more on the patient's needs. The solution needed to assist the caregiver in connecting their work to their patient and inform others of the patient's condition and needs in real time. They needed to save time and money in labor and mileage, with reduced administrative trips to the office. Previously, Ambercare had used paper notes to document patient care and mileage reimbursement. This was extremely ineffective and there was no accuracy in mileage or correct documentation. They needed to ensure care with a cost effective solution. They turned to mobile solutions to facilitate electronic documentation needed to record those services and capture accurate



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Michael Merrell
COO at Ambercare

documentation, all the while helping move toward a complete visit record.

Ambercare had been using a solution for their electronic health record for several years. CellTrak’s mobile solutions offered a seamless integration with the EHR and other systems. This enabled Ambercare to simplify and lower mileage reimbursement, obtain better staff accountability and ensure safety of staff. Ambercare discovered a tremendous cost savings in mileage reimbursement and more accurate scheduling for patient visits.

“We were very happy to be offered a choice when selecting a cost-effective device,” says Michael Merrell, COO of Ambercare. “Since we have different departments on different devices we were able to select multiple devices according to the department using them. We are successfully running visits, using our staff’s time better all while documenting at the point of care. We have embraced this technology to better use resources and serve our patients to accommodate their ever-changing needs. ”

Mobile technology had multiple benefits, not the least of all was GPS, which helps caregivers get to appointments quicker. As a solution, mobile is easy to implement since everyone has a cell phone. Employees viewed the mobile solution as a perk and a better solution than laptop for its advanced technology and convenience. From an operations standpoint, it helped Ambercare be at the forefront of compliance with all regulations while simultaneously providing the best care.

“By giving our caregivers excellent tools to assist them in patient care, it allows them to offer better and more compassionate care to every patient,” says Mary Merrell, Ambercare’s CEO. “We are embracing technology to its fullest by adding more tools to better assist them in patient care. Each department has better accuracy in patient documentation and is above the standard in healthcare regulations.”

CellTrak was originally selected for their home health aides but has now successfully rolled out to Ambercare’s field coordinators and clinical liaisons. Celltrak’s mobile solution was able to offer field staff choices. Ambercare was able to implement both Blackberry and iPhone devices for their point of care solution.

Mobile technology is now, and will continue to be, more relevant in everyday activities in the healthcare continuum. With the decrease of landlines in homes and the increase and affordability of mobile devices, mobile documentation via devices is sure to impact immediate needs industry-wide. With a no-nonsense focus on providing better patient care and keeping agencies compliant, a mobile solution allows the staff to only take minutes to update care plans, streamline communications and create care team collaboration.

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“Ambercare wanted to be able to ensure that all scheduled visits were completed and that care plans were followed, which in turn improved the quality of care patients received,” says Catherine Rosacker-Sharp, hospice administrator for Ambercare. “Mobile technology also interfaced with our EMR. We are able to visualize which visits have been missed or delayed at any time and make sure patients are cared for in a timely manner. The new solutions gives employees more time to spend with the patients versus driving to the office for care plans and schedules. It also has improved our compliance because care plans were literally at their fingertips.”

Improving technology and access to information are key to efficient and high quality care, and mobile technology comes with the added benefit of cost containment. For Ambercare durable medical equipment’s division, having five warehouses spread out over the entire state made it a real challenge to keep a handle on their inventory. In the past two years they have implemented a real-time inventory control system that allows them to know exactly what inventory exists in each location. Because of this technology, they are on their way to making inventory ordering “just in time” instead of “just in case.” Last year Ambercare set up an online shopping cart for customers to allow customers in remote areas of the state to shop and order anytime day or night and the vendor drop ships directly to the customer’s door.

Better Outcomes

Improving outcomes at the point of care is a critical challenge for healthcare. Combining post acute processes and technology to provide a foundation for care provider collaboration via a common approach to secured electronic healthcare records is critical to the future success of the healthcare systems. At the end of the day for Ambercare, the most important return is in the quality of care for their patients. Mobile healthcare solutions enable real-time, informed care that focuses on improving patient outcomes. Using mobile solutions, Ambercare is meeting and exceeding the industry goals by improving health outcomes and preventing readmissions all at their fingertips on a mobile device.

Ambercare:

Ambercare is the only Employee owned Health Care agency in the state of New Mexico, currently employing over 2000 employees. Ambercare has 12 offices across the State of New Mexico offering Hospice, Home Health care, Medical Equipment and Personal Care Services. By offering a full range of care and services Ambercare can best meet the needs of patients and their families. www.ambercare.com

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