

Why Your Next Hire Should Be a Chatbot

10 ways digital tools can address workforce gaps & increase patient volume

By Krishna Kurapati

As we enter 2023, rising expenses, including wage growth, worker shortages, payment rate cuts and changing regulations in the pandemic affected world continue to overwhelm the home health industry's bottom line, and there's little relief as inflation continues to hold the nation hostage.

Contrary to these national problems, America's senior population is rapidly growing and most prefer to age in their own homes. At the same time, our health care workforce is shrinking. Finding a qualified person—professional caregivers, personal

care or home health aides, direct-care workers, certified nursing assistants and therapists—to provide in-home care for these patients is a Herculean task. Indeed, COVID-19 turned a spotlight on the ways older and vulnerable populations were left behind.

According to the Home Care Association of America's State of Home Care Industry at a Crossroads Report, many homecare agencies are addressing this shortage by boosting wages, benefits and incentives, including bonuses up to \$1,200. IBISWorld reports

wages paid in the home care subsector have increased to 57.5% of revenue in 2021, up from 50.7% in 2016.

From 2018 to 2028, the long-term care sector will need to fill 8.2 million job openings in direct care, including 1.3 million new jobs to meet rising demand, and 6.9 million openings caused by workers who transfer to other occupations or exit the labor force.

Amid the onerous costs associated with staff recruitment, retention and turnover, a home-based care leader must find creative solutions—but where to start?

One idea is to look to health care counterparts that are already finding great success in the virtual care landscape. Almost weekly, health care organizations of all sizes and types are in the headlines touting consumer and provider acceptance of the integral use of digitally enabled tools and remote process automation options like chatbots that can interact with patients, solve problems and spur actions. Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are helping bend the cost curve and preserve margins to sustain compliance and achieve business performance viability.

To help jump start your digital transformation, here are the top 10 use cases for AI-powered chatbot remote process automation to introduce to begin enhancing home healthcare.

1 Speed staff onboarding.
Automate the delivery of onboarding forms and

30%

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information quickly to new employees to complete required agency documentation. The quicker the team member is enrolled in your system, the faster you can start billing clients for their services.

2 Reduce patient intake time & hasten patient onboarding.

Medicare requires patient referrals be boarded within 48 hours. Speed up onboarding by sending a chatbot upon receipt of a referral to introduce patients to home health services and to confirm their willingness to receive services.

The chatbot can also complete administrative forms and auto-upload them to the office, which also speeds insurance processing.

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3 Reduce administrative busy work.

Automatically confirm employee certifications and auto insurance to speed administrative tasks, reducing a manager's workload and avoiding the need for staff to come into the office. Simply scan and upload images of documents and avoid a trip to the office.

4 Automatically fill last-minute patient additions to the schedule.

This time-saving task will mitigate



multiple manager and staff calls, improving organization and productivity. This is especially important when the addition is a new referral.

5 Save wasted patient trips.

Automate outreach to patients to ensure they will be present and prepared for a planned on-site visit or have the opportunity to reschedule.

6 Integrate remote patient monitoring.

Supplement after-hours requests for in-person visits with virtual consults from the comfort of the patient's home to cut down on travel time and costs.

7 Reduce avoidable emergency department & hospital visits.

Offer on-demand virtual visits to evaluate the need for a home visit or a trip to a local emergency room.

8 Provide HIPAA-secure staff communication.

Avoid potential penalties and harm to your business reputation by providing secure texting options between employees.

9 Securely communicate with patients & caregivers.

Improve patient satisfaction and CAHPS scores by enhancing proactive communication

10 Enable discrete distress signaling.

Track and pinpoint a staff member's GPS location in emergencies or unsafe situations.

Empower your managers and care workers with digital-first strategies that promote and streamline human connection between caregivers and their patients, augment the staffing shortage, reduce unwarranted expenditures, and help people access care on their terms. Not only do chatbots, secure texting and virtual visits automate routine operational tasks, these tools yield big benefits that re-energize leadership and staff to spend quality time with patients. **HC**

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