

AN E-BOOK BY



INTEGRATED CARE SERVICES: THE ROAD TO THE RIGHT CARE FOR THE RIGHT COST

Collaboration ensures
that operators deliver
consistent value
to residents



SPONSORED BY





Photo: SDI Productions/Getty Images

Health issues become more numerous, chronic and complex – even the norm – as we age, and an incohesive approach to healthcare can exacerbate issues.

“Left improperly or inadequately addressed because of poorly coordinated care ... fragmentation can result in healthcare that not only fails to adequately meet



A compassionate, person-centered approach allows each resident to live at his or her highest level of functioning.

— MADHU KRISH, COO, SYNCHRONY REHAB

the needs of older people but also leads to substantial, avoidable costs,” as the World Health Organization pointed out in a recent bulletin.

A VALUE-BASED WORLD

The US healthcare system, according to the Centers



for Medicare & Medicaid Services, is on a trajectory for which value is coming to be defined by a series of eight key priorities: person-centered care, safety, chronic conditions, seamless care coordination, equity, affordability and efficiency, wellness and prevention, and behavioral health.

Those priorities are part of a tool called the Cascade of Meaningful Measures, which CMS is using to examine existing healthcare quality measures, align or reduce measures where there are too many, and identify gaps where new measures may need to be developed.

“Quality healthcare is the ultimate goal of this tool,” said Synchrony Pharmacy Chief Operating Officer Lance Miller. Synchrony Pharmacy is part of Synchrony Health Services along with Synchrony Rehab and Synchrony Lab.

The tool also can be helpful to senior living and skilled nursing providers as well as others along the healthcare continuum.

“By focusing on these priorities through effective coordination, we can reduce costs and provide quality outcomes, which is the cornerstone of value-based care,” said Synchrony Vice President of Marketing Liz Barlow.

It is important that residents and patients receive consistent value in the care they receive, and integrated care services help ensure that that goal is met. This



approach, Miller said, helps secure medication adherence through specialized packaging and education, increased safety through reviews related to polypharmacy, and hospital readmission reductions through additional efforts.

By focusing on each resident or patient, an integrated care and service provider can collaborate with senior living and skilled nursing operators to reduce the risk of falls, pressure ulcers, medication side effects and hospitalizations, all while encouraging long-term care providers to work with nurses and other care team members to create care plans that lead to improved quality outcomes.

"We believe that a compassionate, person-centered approach allows each resident to live at his or her highest level of functioning," said Synchrony Rehab Chief Operating Officer Madhu Krish.

INTEGRATION IS THE SOLUTION

The WHO calls for greater integration within the health system and between health and social services as a way to repair fragmentation and change the way services are organized.

One example of such integration are the pharmacy, rehab and lab service programs offered by Synchrony



Photo: Lumina/Getty Images

An integrated care services approach helps secure medication adherence and safety, among other benefits.



Health Services, which, by working with one another and in collaboration with referring physicians and nurses, drive outcomes such as fewer rehospitalizations and falls, gains in wellness and function, and more effective wound care and wound prevention.

Better clinical decision-making provides better outcomes for residents, keeping them safe and at lower risk for hospitalization.

— SAM MILLHOLLAN, VICE PRESIDENT, SYNCHRONY LAB



Such customized collaborations allow healthcare professionals to make informed decisions about resident and patient care, leading to improved person-centered efforts tailored to individual needs and preferences. This personalized approach, Barlow said, also results in increased customer satisfaction and improved quality metrics, evidence that residents and patients are receiving the best possible care and services and are achieving the best possible outcomes.

"Senior living needs to be an integrated health model that operates with a variety of constituencies that include labs, pharmacy, rehab, primary care and specialty care. The only way to do that is to really narrow your network and focus on your residents' care by engaging highly qualified people, like geriatricians and specialists, who are well-trained and well-versed in the care of seniors and who understand their needs," said ALG Senior President and CEO Charlie Trefzger. Hickory, NC-based ALG Senior supports operational functions for a network of more than 150 senior living communities nationwide, is an advocate of such coalescence.

At Synchrony Health Services, examples of the integrated approach include its collaborative services for skilled nursing, through which pharmacy, rehab and lab services work together to meet the needs of the skilled nursing residents and patients. And Synchrony's "screen, evaluate, treat," or SET, program sees the three units often collaborating on providing services through the organization's falls protocol.

In fact, collaboration is key.

"We strive to be quality-driven and to consolidate care efforts through our three lines of service," said Sam Millhollan, vice president of Synchrony Lab. "With the inte-



gration of services through Synchrony, our three services collaborate together on resident outcomes. This reduces staff time and also reduces redundancy of care. And better clinical decision-making provides better outcomes for residents, keeping them safe and at lower risk for hospitalization.”

Krish said he believes that the collaboration between interdisciplinary teams — for instance, rehab therapists working closely with pharmacists and laboratory staff members, in addition to nursing, social services and dietary staff members — is having a major effect on clinical outcomes.

MAKING WELLNESS COUNT

The very essence of wellness is preventing future chronic conditions while helping to keep individuals at their highest level of independence.

Synchrony’s Breathe program, for example, combines physical, occupational and speech therapy with interdisciplinary involvement to improve outcomes among residents and patients living with pulmonary conditions.

Another example is SynchronyOne, a program that features individual training sessions with residents to help them reach specific fitness goals. And the Synchrony-Fit program, which recently began rolling out to 16 Trilogy Health Services senior living and care communities,



Anything that allows us to become more effective and efficient is something we can leverage in terms of our labor capability.

— CHARLIE TREFZGER, PRESIDENT AND CEO, ALG SENIOR

already is reaping big dividends across various levels of care and service, according to the company.

When it comes to medication optimization, the pharmacy area supports an initiative around a novel drug packaging system called PackEDGE, which helps improve adherence among Medicare beneficiaries in independent living community and home settings, leading to



better overall health for those who have limited access to resources.

Managing medications and avoiding rehospitalizations are top goals at ALG Senior as well.

“This includes deprescribing to avoid medication errors,” Trefzger said. “It’s fundamental in our relationship with Synchrony.”

Much of that goal is achieved through reconciliation and communication with everyone from primary care providers to residents and patients themselves. ALG Senior also is planning to roll out an institutional equivalent special needs plan, or IE-SNP, which focuses heavily on preventive care, Trefzger said.

Wellness efforts already are showing demonstrable improvements in outcomes, according to Synchrony.

For example, incorporating Synchrony’s collaborative programs, such as SET (screen, evaluate, treat), during skilled therapy interventions has helped Krish and his rehab team see leading outcomes in residents’ and patients’ overall functional status and also has demonstrated wound healing and improved skin integrity, as well as wound prevention, fall risk declines and enhanced quality of life.

And by working collaboratively with care teams, reviewing polypharmacy issues, vaccination programs and collaborative care agreements, Miller said, Synchrony Pharmacy will be able to reduce risk not only from falls but also in other areas, such as wound care and infections.

TOWARD A STRONGER CAREGIVING WORKFORCE

Value-based efforts also benefit the long-term care workforce, improving retention.

Maintaining resident wellness, for example, helps lower the daily burden on staff members to address residents’ mounting chronic health issues and their medications while ensuring that they have one service contact point instead of three, Barlow said.

“Synchrony’s pharmacy, lab and rehab are fundamental to what we’re trying to accomplish” in the area of labor, ALG Senior’s Trefzger said. “Anything that allows us to become more effective and efficient, including our joint efforts toward interoperability, is extraordinarily important and something that we can leverage in terms of our labor capability.” ■