

WHITE PAPER

How Technology Can Improve Home Care

Introduction

The home care industry is experiencing advancements that have the potential to transform the way care is delivered. As we look ahead to 2024, exploring the key tech trends that will shape the home care landscape is crucial. In this white paper, we will delve into the role of technology in improving home care and how it can address the unique needs of individuals requiring care.

Informed by the expertise of AxisCare's CTO/COO, John Atkinson, and VP of Engineering, Kevin Smith, this paper reflects their perspectives on home care and the technology influencing the industry. Their extensive knowledge and experience lend weight and authority to the insights and trends discussed in this paper.

Hospital Visit Tracking: Optimizing Care Levels

[Keeping track of hospital visits](#) is crucial in ensuring that clients receive the necessary care and attention they need. Advancements in home health care software provide an excellent opportunity to utilize the potential in tracking hospital visits. This enables home care agencies to monitor and optimize care plans more efficiently. By incorporating tracking tools in their home care software, agencies can ensure seamless transitions and consistent continuity of care, reducing the risk of readmissions and improving overall care coordination. This ultimately leads to better health outcomes for clients and further separates your agency from the competition.

A notable finding among seniors is the presence of avoidable visits to the emergency room, which can impose a financial burden on hospitals. Home care agencies tracking their clients' ER visits closely and presenting them to hospitals can demonstrate that they are valuable referral partners. Hospitals can avoid unnecessary readmissions by referring patients to reliable home care agencies after emergency department visits.

Hospital Visit Tracking: Optimizing Care Levels Cont.

To provide some context, the federal government provides funding and reimbursement to hospitals for senior treatments through the [Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program \(HRRP\)](#). There are specific reasons and conditions for which the government is concerned, such as Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI), Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Heart Failure (HF), [and more](#). If a senior goes to the hospital for one of these reasons, the hospital wants to be reimbursed. If the hospital provides proper care and the senior doesn't return within a specified time period for the same reason, the reimbursement will be as expected. However, if the hospital doesn't provide adequate care and the senior returns, the reimbursement will be lower. According to a research article titled "[A Reduction in Readmissions Results in Net Savings for Most Hospitals: An Examination of Medicare's Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program](#)" from the peer-reviewed journal *Medical Care Research and Review*, for an average hospital, preventing one extra readmission can lead to reimbursement gains of \$10,000 to \$58,000.

Again, home care agencies can play a vital role in ensuring seniors receive proper care to prevent hospital readmissions. By regularly checking on their clients, ensuring medication compliance, healthy eating, bathing, exercise, and other factors that contribute to better health outcomes, home care agencies can provide cost-effective care compared to hospital visits. *"Using a home care agency can be a much more affordable option compared to going to a hospital later on,"* says John Atkinson. In summary, the entire healthcare continuum is incentivized to reduce hospital visits. Home care software can track [hospital admissions](#) and reasons for seniors receiving care at home care agencies. [Documenting home care](#) is invaluable, and this information can be reported to hospitals, demonstrating the effectiveness of home care agencies in preventing readmissions.



Furthermore, agencies can leverage a home care software's [custom forms](#) to create comprehensive assessments. These assessments can include a risk assessment of re-hospitalizations, providing an additional layer of insight and proactive care management.

AI in Home Care: The Intelligent Future

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionize the home care industry by leveraging intelligent algorithms and machine learning models. These advanced technologies can analyze vast amounts of data, enabling accurate predictions of care needs and providing actionable insights. By harnessing the power of AI, home care agencies can identify patterns and potential risks and offer personalized recommendations for care plans. This proactive and tailored approach to care delivery has the potential to significantly enhance client outcomes, ensuring higher satisfaction and well-being.

As Kevin Smith puts it, *"AI is a valuable tool that can be utilized to automate various aspects of a business, freeing up resources to concentrate on the human element. It is important to note that AI does not replace human interactions, but rather enhances them."* There are several potential use cases for AI, such as predicting caregiver churn and health outcomes related to client changes. However, the applicability of large language models in home care remains less clear, as accuracy is crucial in providing care. It is important to consider both the benefits and limitations of AI in the context of home care while acknowledging its transformative potential in specific areas.

Funding for Home Care: Driving Efficiency in the Industry

The U.S. home healthcare services market was valued at \$90.47 billion in 2022 and is projected to reach [\\$156.28 billion by 2030](#). The industry is experiencing a remarkable surge in funding from various sources, including government entities and private investors. This substantial influx of financial support is driving efficiency and innovation and facilitating the widespread adoption of cutting-edge technologies. With increased resources at their disposal, home care agencies are now able to invest in state-of-the-art systems and tools that not only enhance the quality of care but also make it more accessible to a broader range of individuals.

Funding for Home Care: Driving Efficiency in the Industry Cont.

This financial backing is paving the way for a future where home care emerges as the preferred choice for individuals seeking personalized and compassionate care in the comfort and familiarity of their own homes. *“I’m excited that home care is growing in adoption for seniors,”* says John Atkinson. *“More seniors are receiving care, contributing to better health outcomes.”*

Electronic Records: Elevating Accessibility and Information Sharing

The transition from traditional paper-based records to electronic records has revolutionized the home care industry, bringing forward many benefits and advancements. With electronic health records (or [EHRs](#)), caregivers, family members, and clients can effortlessly access and exchange vital information, fostering seamless collaboration and enhancing the quality of care provided. This technology also allows for real-time updates and monitoring, ensuring accurate and up-to-date information at all times. John Atkinson explains that caregivers are now *“providing care with the latest information accessible to them, whereas before, there might have been a greater lag in the care recipient having access to that information.”*



Comprehensive suites of home health care software tools including care planning, [shift documentation](#), and [secure HIPAA-compliant communication](#) are available for home care agencies to leverage in their day-to-day operations. Long gone are the days of text messaging between caregivers and clients. By moving away from text messaging and using a [secure home care software mobile app](#), agencies can ensure compliance with HIPAA regulations and provide a secure platform for seamless communication between caregivers and clients.

Data Utilization: Driving Enhanced Care Outcomes

Data plays a crucial role in improving care outcomes. By leveraging innovative technologies, such as advanced data analytics and machine learning, home care agencies can capture and analyze vast amounts of data to gain valuable insights. These insights can help agencies identify patterns, trends, and potential areas for improvement in their care delivery processes.

[Business intelligence softwares](#) provide actionable analytics and customizable reports that enable agencies to make informed and strategic decisions. With the ability to track key performance indicators, such as gross revenue, hours billed, and caregiver turnover ratio, agencies can optimize their resources and ensure the highest level of care for their clients.

One specific area where data-driven solutions have proven to be highly effective is [medication management](#). Recording and managing medication administration electronically significantly reduces errors and enhances safety.

"Ensuring regular medication intake is key when caring for a senior with multiple prescriptions. This can be easily achieved with technology that can automate the reminders and alerts for medication. By using technology, we're not looking to replace the human touch, but rather extend the human experience. The administrative and repetitive tasks can be automated to free up more time for caregivers to focus on the human element of care. Our aim is to enhance the capabilities of staff and caregivers with technology."

-Kevin Smith, AxisCare's VP of Engineering



Streamlining Administrative Tasks: Efficiency at Your Fingertips

A significant area where streamlining is often needed in home care operations is the billing side. In the case of [private pay clients](#), printing and mailing invoices and receiving checks back is highly inefficient and time-consuming. This manual process requires extensive tracking. To address this, [automated billing and collection solutions](#) can be used. Invoices can be electronically sent to clients or their responsible parties, who can then conveniently pay the invoice electronically. The payments are automatically applied to the invoices, and outstanding balances can be easily monitored. For billing third-party payers like state [Medicaid](#) programs or [Veterans Affairs](#), home health care softwares can enable electronic billing and track remittances (payments) received on those claims. Additionally, home health care softwares can allow for handling rejections, denials, and partial payments. John Atkinson highlights, *"Many individuals receive a PDF document that lists all their claims and payments for each visit. They then go through each line manually to verify if any errors were made and if a correction is required. This can be a time-consuming process. I highly recommend switching to electronic claims and remittances for a more efficient and convenient claim management experience."*

By automating these administrative tasks, home care agencies can streamline their processes and save valuable time and resources, allowing them to focus on providing top-quality care for their clients. This not only enhances efficiency but also improves overall client satisfaction and agency reputation. A case in point is the [successful implementation of a robust home care software for CDM](#), a Washington-based home care agency. After Heather Jurczak, the owner of CDM, recognized the need for home care in her area, she realized that her team would need a strategic partner and comprehensive home health care software to continue scaling their business. Prior to using their new software, CDM's client base was 90% Medicaid, and they were under pressure to find a software provider who had solutions in place to help them remain EVV compliant. CDM found a software that featured intuitive navigation, efficient yet personalized scheduling, and a user-friendly [EVV-compliant](#) mobile app. Read more about CDM and their strategic partnership [here](#).

Enhancing Communication: The Key to Client Satisfaction

Effective communication is crucial in providing quality care. As Kevin Smith puts it, *“If we rely on phone calls or text messages to keep families updated on their loved one's care, it can be difficult, and families might miss important information. However, if we use an app for caregivers as well as a family portal, and allow back offices to receive messages from multiple people, we can make communication easier and more efficient. By using data already collected in the system, we can provide families with updates on their loved one's care progression, which can be incredibly beneficial.”* Intuitive home health care software platforms enable real-time updates, seamless information sharing, [schedule coordination](#), and prompt issue resolution for caregivers. This type of streamlined approach fosters clear and efficient communication, strengthening the bond between caregivers and clients. By embracing technology, the home care industry can revolutionize care delivery, ensuring exceptional care for every client. Thanks to the widespread use of smartphones, communication possibilities for agencies have expanded. Advancements in client communication include [mobile apps](#) that empower caregivers in the field to communicate with their clients efficiently.

Technology facilitates communication between agencies, caregivers, and clients, especially in cases of change in condition. A caregiver can communicate such changes through their [point of care software](#) mobile app, enabling their agency's office to investigate and take necessary action. Family members can also access information about their loved ones' care online through an online tool such as a [family portal](#). This scalable communication approach reduces costs and allows families to stay updated on the progress of their loved ones' care.



Caregiver Training: Empowering Caregivers

Enhancing caregiver training is crucial for improving care outcomes. In today's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, platforms such as [Nevvon](#), [Home Care Pulse](#), and [CareAcademy](#) play a vital role in offering innovative solutions for comprehensive training programs. These platforms equip caregivers with the necessary skills and knowledge through online courses and virtual simulations.

These advanced training programs go beyond the basics, diving deep into specialized areas such as medication management, wound care, and dementia care. Caregivers are equipped with the latest evidence-based practices and best-in-class techniques to confidently navigate the unique challenges in their day-to-day caregiving responsibilities. Whether it's understanding clients' complex needs with chronic conditions or implementing person-centered care approaches, these training programs provide caregivers with the knowledge and confidence to provide exceptional care.

Moreover, these training programs also focus on enhancing the interpersonal skills of caregivers, emphasizing empathy, effective communication, and cultural sensitivity. Caregivers are trained to build meaningful connections with their clients, fostering a sense of trust and reassurance. This approach to caregiver training prioritizes both technical skills and the human aspect of caregiving.



[Home Care Pulse reports](#) that new hires who have a positive onboarding experience are 70% more likely to stay with an organization for more than three years. By investing in comprehensive caregiver training programs, home care agencies can elevate the standard of care provided to clients. Caregivers become true advocates for their clients' well-being, providing physical support, emotional comfort, and companionship. The result is a transformative care experience that truly makes a difference in the lives of those in need.

Visibility in Home Care: Insights for Informed Care

Technology plays a crucial role in empowering home care agencies by offering them [enhanced visibility](#) into the condition of their clients. Agencies can continuously track and monitor vital signs, medication adherence, and activity levels using advanced monitoring systems. This comprehensive data provides valuable insights for informed care decisions, enabling agencies to develop tailored care plans that address each client's specific needs.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the world. One positive impact was improved visibility for healthcare providers regarding healthcare information," says John Atkinson. *"The trend of increased visibility is also happening in the home care industry. Home care agencies are gaining better insight into the needs and conditions of their clients, which allows them to offer customized care solutions."*



Conclusion

As we look ahead to the future, the role of technology in the home care industry becomes increasingly vital. By embracing these advancements, your agency will be well positioned for future growth. You will be able to provide exceptional care that meets the evolving needs of individuals who require home care.

Learn More

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References and Resources:

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- [AxisCare's Hospitalizations Features](#)
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