White Paper

How Effective Call Center Software Improves Patient Transfer Center Workflows

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There is a lot of coordination involved when getting a patient from point A to point B. That is why hospital systems will have a dedicated Patient Transfer Center to coordinate inpatient-to-inpatient, emergency department-to-emergency department, and hospital-to-hospital transfers for adult and pediatric patients. Communication occurs between medical staff and the call center agent.

Patients may be admitted to a hospital from their home, workplace, or other hospitals or clinics and can arrive in various ways, including via ambulance or helicopter. They may also already be in a hospital but need to be moved throughout the facility for tests, treatment, surgery, recovery, and visits with other medical personnel located on a hospital campus.

Patient Transfer Call Center

Patient transfer centers are dedicated call centers that provide a way for medical personnel to reach an appropriate hospital and/or specialist for their patient's needs when they have to transfer a patient from an outside hospital or residence, or within their healthcare organization. Typically, a referring physician calls one number that directs them immediately to the patient transfer center.

The operators at these centers are experienced professionals and are often registered nurses or EMTs with critical care experience. They are available 24/7 and have access to vast hospital and clinical networks. They conveniently and efficiently coordinate:

- Emergency transfers or direct admissions.
- Securing an accepting physician.
- Bed assignments.
- Paramedic and ambulance arrangements.
- Transfers for critical care such as burns, cardiac, and stroke.
- On-going communication with referring physicians.

Patient Transfer Centers and Call Center Software

Calls come into a patient transfer center in a variety of ways including, via two-way radio, web, phones, and various apps. The workstation of one of these operators often has the same layout as a 911 dispatcher, with at least three computer monitors, multiple keyboards, mice, and sometimes foot pedals, while also using a radio.

This mixture of components from different vendors all has its own software. It is paramount that the call center software they use seamlessly integrates with the different technologies to streamline communication and workflows.

[Related Case Study: Customized Communication Software for Patient Transfer Centers]

When a call comes in, the agent immediately asks for the accepting and referring physician's name, the patient's name, the patient's current location, the patient's diagnosis, and the patient's

specific medical needs. This information helps operators assess the patient's needs and arrange for the transfer.

Patient transfer centers must ensure that their call center software can provide conference bridges and conference joins for physician consults, offer customizable scripting options to help operators navigate a dizzying array of calls, and be supported by a reliable, single source of truth (SSOT) directory to ensure that all updates propagate to the entire system without duplication.

Connecting with On-Call Medical Staff

Patient transfer centers allow their agents to access and view <u>on-call schedules</u> in real time. Many centers use a HIPAA-compliant <u>secure messaging app</u> to connect with on-call medical staff and ensure security when communicating about a person's health.

These apps provide end-to-end encryption and can integrate with the center's software to send secure texts, photos, videos, and audio files. Operators can use the app from their desktop or any smart device.

Once a message is sent, agents can see if it was delivered and read. If they don't receive a response from the person on call, they can escalate it to another physician. These apps usually provide a way to track message activity, including a message log and message histories. They indicate to whom messages were sent, when messages were read, who replied to a message, etc. The apps can present the data as reports for hospital and call center managers.

The Importance of Recording and Reporting

The patient transfer center must keep reports for hospital leadership. Reports such as physician transfer choices, number of transfers, and call logs provide data to help protect callers, operators, and hospital systems in litigious situations. Calls, screen capture videos and images, messages, and more can be recorded, tracked, time-stamped, and stored.

<u>Call analytics</u> also help the patient transfer center improve workflows and increase caller

satisfaction. It is important that reports can be customized; however, some standard reports provide helpful information, such as:

- **Agent Activity** – Analytics about an agent's activity, including number of calls, holds, conference time, dispatch activity, and events such as login/out and ready/not ready.
- **Billing** – Centers that need to charge departments or facilities for services can use billing codes to track accounts and their call activity for invoicing.
- **Call Details** – Detailed call information, including dispatch jobs, dial-out activity, messages, message history, events by agent, speech recognition events, and live call information.
- **Call Traffic** – An interval-based assessment of live call traffic to help gauge call volume and agent staffing.

Every patient transfer center is different and has different needs. However, they all require an enormous amount of coordination. Transporting patients can be a life-saving effort and is an integral part of patient flow, patient care, and the patient experience. It is critical that patient transfer centers use a robust call center software program that readily integrates with other products to increase efficiency.

Please contact us with questions.

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