

Customized Communication Software for Patient Transfer Centers

Case Study

At a glance

- ✓ Patient Transfer Centers Are Different from Hospital Call Centers
- ✓ Finding the Right Vendor
- ✓ An Upgraded Platform Provides Better Support to Transfer Coordinators
- ✓ Customizable Patient Transfer Center Communication Software
- ✓ Unexpected Benefits of a Robust Communication System

amtelco

 amtelco.com  info@amtelco.com

 4800 Curtin Drive
McFarland, WI 53558
800.356.9148

CHALLENGE

Create a robust, purpose-built communication solution to improve the specific workflows experienced by a busy patient transfer center.

SOLUTIONS

- Provide flexible, interoperable communication software that could integrate with and improve existing systems.
- Use call recordings to double-check critical details.
- Improve 3-way calling with unlimited conference bridge users.

CUSTOMER QUOTE

“Some vendors think they have a perfect solution, and everyone should just buy it. Most don't understand our work is completely different in so many areas. Amtelco is the exception because they helped us succeed by listening to us. The Amtelco representative was very humble and knowledgeable. He knew what he was doing and was the first person who really understood patient transfer centers. Most vendors think they know my business – they don't. They know call centers but not transfer centers. Our partnership with Amtelco has been great.”

**Divisional Executive Director
of Transfer Services**

The western part of the United States is home to a health system that includes 51 hospitals, 1,000 clinics, 18 supportive housing facilities, and more than 122,000 caregivers, nurses, and physicians. The California market of this system comprises 17 hospitals and is divided between the Northern and Southern California sections of the state. These two areas are home to two separate but centrally managed patient transfer centers that serve each California region. The two centers employ 30-40 transfer coordinators who, together, handle an astonishing 2,000 patient transfer cases per month and coordinate with approximately 350 regional hospitals.

Patient Transfer Centers Are Different from Hospital Call Centers

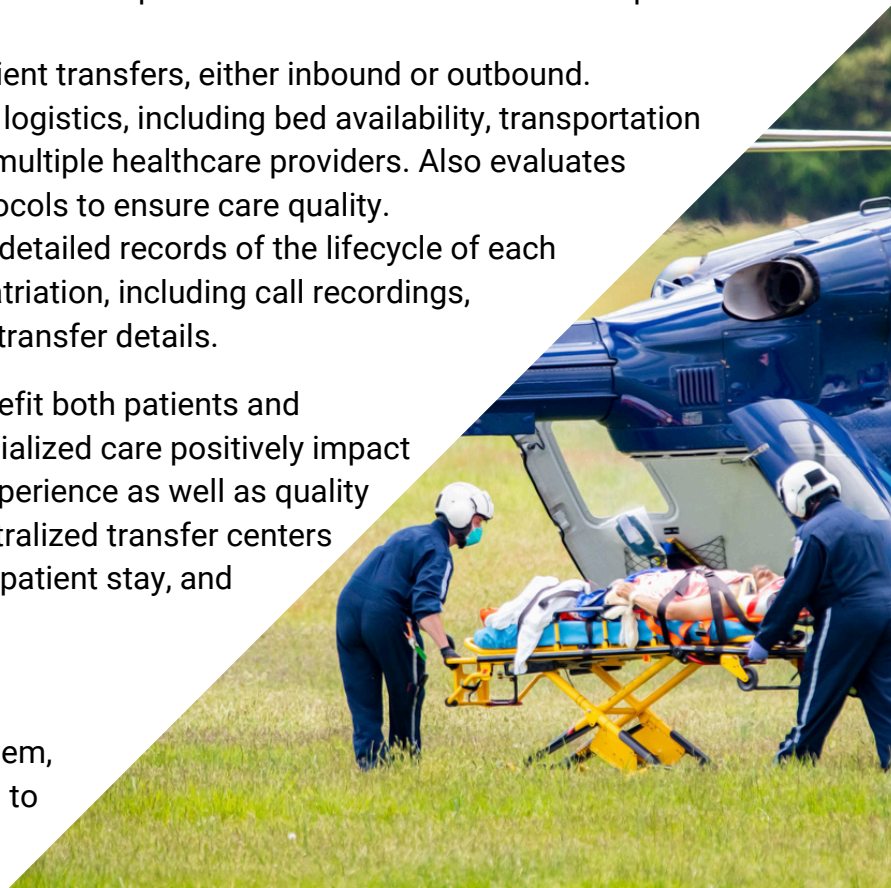
Both hospital call centers and patient transfer centers are critical components of healthcare service, but each serves different purposes. A hospital call center handles various call types and can function as the virtual front door of an organization. The patient transfer center handles various requests for hospital admission and is solely responsible for coordinating the placement and logistical processes for patient movement between different healthcare facilities. Transfer coordinators collaborate in real-time with multiple hospital departments and processes, streamlining and integrating internal and external operations, and ensuring that patients receive care as expediently as possible.

Key functions of a Patient Transfer Center include:

- **Specialized Focus.** Dedicated solely to patient transfers between hospitals and direct admissions from physician offices.
- **Clinical Expertise.** Staffed with healthcare professionals who understand medical terminology, patient needs, and are able to leverage internal hospital resources to determine the impact of any relevant factors.
- **Patient Intake.** Receives requests for patient transfers, either inbound or outbound.
- **Complex Coordination.** Handles intricate logistics, including bed availability, transportation arrangements, and communication with multiple healthcare providers. Also evaluates service line specific procedures and protocols to ensure care quality.
- **Documentation and Tracking.** Maintains detailed records of the lifecycle of each transfer, from initiation to discharge/repatriation, including call recordings, patient information, medical history, and transfer details.

Patient transfer centers can significantly benefit both patients and healthcare systems. Timely transfers to specialized care positively impact patient outcomes and improve the patient experience as well as quality of care. Health systems benefit because centralized transfer centers optimize bed utilization, reduce the length of patient stay, and improve overall resource allocation.

The Divisional Executive Director of Transfer Services for the California market of this system, says, “The patient transfer center is designed to



ensure patient care quality and continuum. When a physician sees a patient in the emergency room or in an inpatient setting, and they determine the patient needs services that aren't available at their location, they contact us to request a transfer to another hospital that can provide the services needed."

The physician only has to make a single call to the transfer center and review the patient's case with a transfer coordinator. "My team will take charge from there calling specialist physicians, admitting physicians, house supervisors, and transport to coordinate a patient's transfer," states the Director. "It's a lot of back-and-forth, and during this time, if the patient's condition changes, everything changes, necessitating us to restart the entire process."

Patient transfer centers provide a time-sensitive service. Coordinators work 24/7 to help patients and hospitals. One patient transfer request can easily turn into 10-15 different calls for the transfer coordinator, especially if a patient becomes emergent or needs multiple specialists.

Transfer coordinators must follow up on each patient case regularly because a patient's condition as well as other factors can change. A patient case can take anywhere from 15 minutes to multiple days to complete. For example, a stable patient may require specialized services that only an academic center can perform. However, these centers are often at capacity, so coordinators must wait for a bed to become available which can take up to week.

Because of the clinical aspects of the job, transfer coordinators receive specifically designed training due to the many different protocols they must know. In addition, there are different processes for each hospital, each service line, and each diagnosis. The transfer coordinators follow a decision tree for each case.

Finding the Right Vendor

The patient transfer center for this organization needed to update its communication system. The team only had one phone number with 20 lines and wanted a way to record calls. It took more than five years to find a vendor who understood the specific needs of a transfer center. "I'm a picky person, and I know what I want. I don't settle. Amtelco was the sixth or seventh vendor we talked to about updating our system," says the



“

To my surprise, the Amtelco representative was very humble and knowledgeable. He knew what he was doing and was the first person who really understood patient transfer centers. Most vendors think they know my business – they don't. They know call centers but not transfer centers.

Director. “To my surprise, the Amtelco representative was very humble and knowledgeable. He knew what he was doing and was the first person who really understood patient transfer centers. Most vendors think they know my business – they don't. They know call centers but not transfer centers.”

Taking the time to listen to the Director about the needs of her team was essential. “Some vendors think they have a perfect solution, and everyone should just buy it,” she says. “Most don't understand our work is completely different in

so many areas. Amtelco is the exception because they helped us succeed by listening to us. They have a very smart technical team that can take user feedback and make changes right away. Our Amtelco Implementation Specialist has made us into superusers. My team can solve any problem because they were taught so well. Our partnership with Amtelco has been great.”

An Upgraded Platform Provides Better Support to Transfer Coordinators

Amtelco's platform offers call recording, which has proved to be a critical tool. Transfer coordinators can review call recordings to double-check details, support the transfer coordinator's written documentation, and share if anything needs to be reviewed. The Business Analyst for the system's transfer center adds, “Sometimes we can't document the full physician order or treatment plan during the call because we're also handling other questions and communications. The recording enables us to go back and listen to what the doctor requested to ensure we are handling the case correctly.”

“We also didn't have a way to identify if an incoming call was an emergency with our previous system,” continues the Analyst. “The Amtelco team mapped out options for our inbound lines, so they are prioritized now depending on call type.”

Another benefit of the updated software is the ability to handle calls remotely. “Using a web-based system has helped us, as a leading organization, to take our services to the next level,” says the

the Director. “We can support our team from home or any location. Managers can take charge of the case remotely instead of multiple calls with the team if there is a difficult case or a critical issue in the middle of the night. I was always hesitant to use a web-based solution because I didn’t think it was designed for transfer centers. However, Amtelco successfully created one, and I’m very proud of their work. I’m happy they created a transfer center solution, and I hope it will help other transfer centers.”

The team is taking advantage of the software’s reporting features to identify call volume patterns for staffing and gain insight into what kinds of calls keep transfer coordinators on the phone longer. Useful call metrics identify opportunities to improve workflows.

Customizable Patient Transfer Center Communication Software

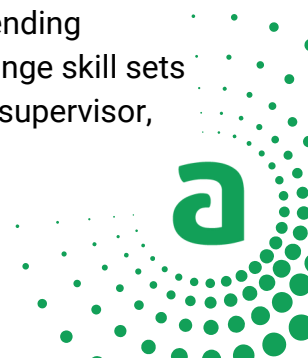
Patient transfer centers rely on various tools and software to streamline operations and ensure efficient patient transfers. Specialized software helps manage the entire transfer process, from initial request to final discharge. Some examples include:

- **Bed Management.** Track bed availability in real-time.
- **Patient Scheduling.** Coordinate appointments and procedures.
- **Transportation Logistics.** Arrange ground and air transportation.
- **Communication Tools.** Facilitate communication between healthcare providers.
- **Reporting and Analytics.** Identify trends, bottlenecks, and areas for improvement to optimize operations, reduce transfer times, and improve patient outcomes.
- **Electronic Health Records (EHRs).** Provide a centralized repository of patient medical information, enabling seamless transfer of critical data between facilities.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS).** Help visualize patient locations, identify the nearest appropriate facilities, and optimize transportation routes.

Different applications often come with their own equipment, and transfer coordinators must juggle all the technology – almost literally – just to perform their jobs each day. This team needed flexible, interoperable communication software that could integrate with and improve existing systems. “We had some specific workflows that Amtelco didn’t initially have a solution for,” says the Director. “However, they were able to quickly develop customized solutions for us to meet our needs.”

Customized software has made workflows less complicated to navigate. The Analyst explains, “It’s easier to manage call flows, call backs, and conferencing because everything is on your screen, and you can move quicker.” The Director agrees, “This is a user-friendly solution that is easily customizable and makes managing high volume and critical situation easier for leaders.”

Skills-based call routing has also helped make call flow more intuitive and efficient by sending different call types to the most qualified transfer coordinator. “Amtelco trained us to change skill sets so the most appropriate person will receive different calls. For example, if someone is a supervisor, they will receive emergent calls,” explains the Analyst.



Unexpected Benefits of a Robust Communication System

An all-inclusive software suite offers effective call management and improves “the little things,” which represent important details that can lead to a better work environment for transfer coordinators. Once the team gained some experience with their new system after it went live, they discovered additional benefits. “The voicemail feature has been great for us. We couldn’t have ALL staff meetings in the past because we feared we’d miss a call. Now, our minds are at ease because we can take 15 minutes for a team huddle and return any non-emergency calls that go to our voicemail. If we have an emergent call, the sirens will sound so we know to answer it immediately,” says the Analyst.

The Director adds, “Another great aspect is that our transfer coordinators can get up and move around. They have a headset and can still take calls but aren't stuck sitting at their desk. I think it's very good for their health.”

Amtelco’s software makes performing 3-way calls much easier. The team can easily add more people to an existing 3-way call. Additionally, the number of callers on the conference bridge isn’t limited, and it is easy to track who is on the line because they are displayed on a transfer coordinator’s computer screen.

The Analyst trained a dozen new transfer coordinators on the system and comments, “I haven’t had any issues training new hires on Amtelco’s platform. The software is very user-friendly, and people were able to use it after only one day of training.”


This system implemented Amtelco’s solution for a single transfer center and expanded within a year to two centers. At present, there is a third implementation in the planning stage. The Director adds, “In conclusion, Amtelco is a good solution for single or multi-hospital transfer centers. It has helped develop seamless processes for transfer management and greatly helped bring clarity and accountability to our operations, enabling the team to do more with less. The software also appears to be well-designed, and Amtelco was very responsive in making the implementation customizable and user-friendly.”

amtelco

Please contact us
with questions.

 800.356.9148

 amtelco.com

 info@amtelco.com

 4800 Curtin Drive
McFarland, WI 53558