3 CRITICAL HOSPICE TRENDS
FOR 2015
INTRODUCTION

If anything can be said about the health care industry, it's that it is a turbulent one. In order for any organization to stay viable today amidst the unpredictability, it must learn to adapt to shifting demands and changing regulations—seemingly overnight.

The hospice and palliative care industry is poised to experience some critical changes in the coming years, and 2015 promises to deliver its share of challenges for nurses and administrators. We have researched industry news, professional groups and specialty literature to identify the issues that will most impact the hospice industry in 2015.

Read on to discover what these trends are, why they are so important and what they mean for your hospice organization.
Although hospice is one of the most patient-centered of care delivery models, patient satisfaction scores will now be published and linked to Medicare reimbursement—which could mean drastic changes for hospice providers.

**WHY IS PATIENT & CAREGIVER SATISFACTION SO IMPORTANT?**

There is an increasing emphasis on the voice of the customer across all industries, driven primarily by the ability for consumers to share their opinions digitally on social media and other platforms. Just as Yelp, Google and Facebook have revolutionized the way we research products, and restaurants, new regulations aim to make the sharing of patient experience available to consumers when researching health care providers.

Developed through a collaboration of the Center for Medicare Services and the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality, The CAHPS Survey® (Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems), measures patients' perceptions of their experiences with hospitals and other health care organizations.

Although some hospices may have been gathering patient survey data for their own internal measurements, CAHPS establishes a national standard for collecting and reporting this data. The published results are intended to aid consumers when choosing providers.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?**

New Medicare Rules require hospice providers to partner with an approved survey vendor in 2015 or they will be penalized 2% in their APU (annual payment update). Survey vendors will begin “dry runs” of the 47-question survey in January 2015, with “live” surveys beginning in April 2015.¹
Identifying critical issues in patient and caregiver experiences early on will save hospice providers from receiving negative scores to be published under the CAHPS program. However, few hospice providers have the internal resources to translate these results into positive organizational change.

To remain competitive in the post-CAHPS era, hospice providers need to identify innovative ways to improve all interactions with patients and caregivers in every aspect of the hospice experience. Limited budgets, training and staff may mean seeking the expertise of outside consultants and service providers to supplement current care models.

Concerned about how CAHPS will impact your hospice organization? Find out more at the CAHPS Resource Center of the National Hospice and Palliative Care website here.

ICD-10 CONVERSION

the ICD-10 conversion may be the biggest disruption in the American health care community in history.

In America, the ICD-10 coding set will have approximately 141,000 codes. The higher level of specificity in medical coding is expected to accomplish several goals:

• Improve the efficiency of billing and reimbursement
• Reflect the advancements in medical and technological advances
• Support refined reimbursement models and future coding updates more effectively
• Allow more automation in billing and payment processing
• Identify errors and potential fraud more easily

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?
The ICD-10 conversion requires every procedure or patient interaction to be coded with specificity like never before. Failure to code properly will mean unparalleled disruption to Medicare and insurance payments—a major concern for every hospice provider.

Some industry experts predict the ICD-10 conversion may be the biggest disruption in the American health care community in history. With an increased emphasis on the specificity of medical coding, the conversion is daunting for nearly every health care provider practicing today.

WHY IS THE ICD-10 CONVERSION SO IMPORTANT?
The newly announced delay in the ICD-10 conversion is a testament to the effort and financial investment it will require of the healthcare industry. But industry experts warn that there is no reason to believe the October 1, 2015 deadline will be extended again.
Training administrators, providers and medical billing staff to comply with the coding requirements is no small feat, but the ICD-10 conversion also means many hospice organization will need to update existing EHR (Electronic Health Record) and billing systems. Every process, manual or electronic, must be ICD-10 compliant. This type of organizational change cannot occur instantly, but taking steps now will give a hospice an advantage come October 1, 2015\(^2\).

Want more information on how to plan for ICD-10? Visit the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ICD-10 page.


NATIONAL NURSING SHORTAGE

Every hospice administrator knows how difficult it is to hire—and keep—a team of qualified nurses. But with new statistics indicating that the national nursing shortage is likely to continue until 2022, recruiting experienced RNs may become even more challenging.

WHY IS THE NATIONAL NURSING SHORTAGE SO IMPORTANT?

With 2 to 3 million more individuals entering the Medicare program as baby-boomers retire, the ability to employ nurses will become increasingly difficult, as to compound the problem, a nursing faculty shortage is interrupting the flow of RNs into the workforce.

This low-supply-high-demand market means experienced nurses can be selective and opt for higher paying jobs, which leaves lean-operating organizations with a dry applicant pool. Many hospices are already experiencing staffing concerns, which means they must brace for an even more severe drought ahead.
WHAT DOES THE NATIONAL NURSING SHORTAGE MEAN FOR YOU?
Hospice providers must be competitive when seeking new hires for nursing positions. Increased wages, addition of job “perks” and better benefits may be considerations for organizations that are experiencing staffing difficulties. Researching industry trends and evaluating competing agencies is necessary to stay attractive to nursing applicants.

Additionally, hospice services must be cognizant of their current nursing staff. Nursing burnout and compassion fatigue can cause even the most dedicated nurses to seek employment elsewhere. If veteran staff members turn in their notice, hospices could be left with vacancies they are simply unable to fill.

Hospice organizations can improve work experience for nurses by employing several strategies: employee wellness programs, education opportunities, third-party service providers, team-building events and employee involvement initiative can decrease turnover rates and attract top talent.

Curious about how to hire and keep a great staff? Get tips and information from the American Nurses Association.

CONCLUSION
The growing market and increasing number of regulatory and financial challenges for the hospice industry mean more strain—for today’s providers.

The organizations that invest in seeking out the newest solutions, technologies and services now will be better positioned to remain competitive in the coming years.

An in-depth analysis of current needs and performance will help an administrator identify the critical areas in need of improvement or proactive measures will prevent disruption to profitability or patient care. The industry trends explored in this guide can be used as springboards for implementing positive institutional change ahead of the curve.

1But this climate provides a chance for significant opportunity as well.
The experts at After Hours Nursing Triage have the innovative solutions to help you stay competitive in a changing market. With world-class support and cutting-edge technology, Our Clinically trained team provides solutions for the challenges that concern you most. Contact one of our Hospice Client Representatives to learn how we can extend your services without extending your staff.

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