3 Tech Trends Driving The Future of Home-Based Care
Home-based care has historically trailed behind other industries in terms of its technology adoption, but the compounded effect of Covid and the shift to value-based care has drastically increased the push to become tech-enabled.

Today, many providers are motivated to invest in technology to improve outcomes, and they are interested in a variety of areas. According to the 2022 Home Health Care News Outlook Survey and Report, 39% of survey respondents said they planned to invest in staff management technology; 35% said they planned to invest in telehealth and predictive analytics; and 32% said they planned to invest in patient engagement technology, among the top categories for tech investment.

As industry leaders plan for these investments, they will be best served to follow 3 tech trends driving the future of home-based care:

1. The shift to a data-driven industry
2. The alignment of value and technology in care delivery
3. The engagement of all stakeholders in tech decisions and implementation

In a recent virtual roundtable series hosted by Home Health Care News in partnership with CDW Healthcare, home-based care leaders identified and discussed trends related to the growing role of technology within home health and home care organizations.

“Providers are using technology to improve workflow efficiencies and outcomes,” says Liz Cramer, chief post-acute and senior care strategist for CDW Healthcare, which provides technology products and solutions for health care organizations of all sizes. “Although telehealth has been around for a many years, we are seeing it utilized more in home care to reduce readmissions along with remote patient monitoring and remote treating monitoring. This allows for triage and deployment of caregivers to those that might be in distress versus that patient going to the ER.”

Caregiver efficiency and data management are two of the top tech priorities among care organizations today, but there is a growing concern for the lack of sophistication in the available operating and data management platforms – even the ones catering specifically to home-based care, roundtable participants shared.

Providers want objective, actionable data for more informed, more efficient decision-making that can improve health outcomes and deliver greater value to patients, family and staff. However, this data is currently expensive and difficult to obtain, and the same is true for building proprietary platforms, which are the only viable alternative right now.

“I would love to see someone rise to the top, own this space and do it well, mimicking what the skilled providers are doing so we can operate within that platform,” said Michelle Cone, SVP of Training and Brand programs at Texas-based home care organization HomeWell. “We want to be a data-driven industry. We want to provide proof of value. We want to show our fall and readmission rates reflecting good stewardship of Medicare dollars. But it’s very difficult to do that.”

Most would argue that pairing skilled and non-skilled services makes sense, but there is not a good way to track patients efficiently in both settings, and the disparity between systems makes integration difficult. As such, providers would like to see improved interoperability among these systems, namely EHRs and chronic disease management tools, according to the Home Health Care News survey. Especially in the non-skilled space, many of the success metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) are ambiguous, and it can be hard to prove how different elements of one agency’s care stack up against a competitor’s.
But this data is critical, operators say.

“I know in my head and heart that our hospice patients at home live longer when they have home care,” says Karen Vassar, owner of Griswold Home Care NoVa West. “Do I have anything to prove it? No. And that’s very frustrating.”

These pain points are the reason data management, integration and analytics are some of the top investment categories amongst home-based care providers.

Investment in these categories allows those providers to not only prove outcomes, but also to inform decisions going forward. This includes all kinds of technologies from consumer-facing voice-enabled tech to digital marketing.

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<th>Categories for Technology Investment 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cloud-based data management and integration</td>
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<td>Predictive analytics/AI</td>
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<td>Voice-enabled tech</td>
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<td>Operations management</td>
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Universalizing value through technology
Alignment of value and technology in care delivery

A higher volume of easily digestible data at providers’ fingertips inspires new means for proving the value of post-acute care—beyond readmission numbers alone. It enables organizations to get more creative with how they interpret and package their data, putting a narrative and consumer-friendly spin on KPIs with measurements like “healthy days at home.”

Additionally, providers can paint a broader picture of their value add by incorporating success metrics around areas like fall prevention and client satisfaction, among others. But today, much of the responsibility for that data procurement and storytelling falls directly on the shoulders of each individual organization.

“Our states are so focused on Medicaid that private pay is often overlooked, so the ability to prove ourselves worthy and valuable is largely dependent on how we capture our own data,” said Tracy Wodatch, VP of Clinical and Regulatory Services at CT Association for Healthcare at Home. “As a result, the small locally owned agencies may not have the same opportunity as larger franchises to prove their value.”

The Key Drivers of Technology Decisions in Home-Based Care

- Getting caregiver buy-in for training and implementation
- Industry fragmentation & silos
- Regulatory compliance
- Lack of data and proof of value
- Data interoperability
- Technological compatibility with patient dwellings
- Electronic Visit Verification
- Lack of a universal health information exchange system
- Staffing and staff efficiency
- Conflicting opinions about where the industry is headed
- Lack of sophistication in operating platforms
- Need to improve user experience
- The shift from fee-for-service to value-based care
The modern necessity of storytelling through data highlights the importance of aligning value and technology in today’s home-based care landscape. Providers that can achieve this balance will position themselves for success as the demand for home-based care increases, and selecting the right technology is key.

“We often end up adopting technology to comply with changes in regulation, so a lot of the technology in which we invest does not necessarily move the needle or add value for the patient,” says Grant Innes, Vice President of Home Health Services at Baylor Scott & White Rehab.

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GRANT INNES
Vice President
Home Health Services for Baylor Scott & White Rehab
Engagement for all stakeholders
Meeting the needs of caregivers, patients and operations professionals

In order for home-based care organizations to capitalize on the opportunities in data and efficiency, they must first garner buy-in from caregivers, clinicians, leadership and even the customers. This is paramount to positioning the organization for success in the transition to value-based care and the evolution of home-based care as a whole. Many providers have established best practices to achieve these goals, and the top practices according to roundtable participants are:

- Offering webinars and seminars (in-house or third-party)
- Engaging front line staff in the implementation process
- Getting buy-in from payers and hospital systems
- Providing continuing education opportunities
- Opening a line of communication with the tech partner/vendor implementation team
- Beta test the technology before launching at scale

The future of tech and home-based care

The home-based care industry has come a long way with technology adoption, but there’s still a lot of ground to cover with respect to post-acute care. With non-skilled organizations at the heels of skilled providers, there is a dire need for technology partners to step up to the plate and meet them in the middle. From the front lines to the C-suite, home-based care professionals have shown a drive and willingness to leverage the power of technology to improve the experience for all stakeholders, and there is so much untapped potential in data and other technologies that will ultimately shape the future of home health and home care.

“Data is king in all aspects of care,” Cramer says. “But it is not just about having data, it is about how the data is used to enhance care delivery and improve patient and caregiver satisfaction. Using data to show how care outcomes and quality measures are better than your competitor will allow for continued census growth and staff retention.”
Today’s home-based care tech boom has spurred providers to invest in technology, but there is nowhere near a one-size-fits-all solution. Home care leadership need a strategic plan to drive bottom-line impact while improving the experience for all stakeholders in the care journey.

CONTACT

To learn how CDW can help home-based care organizations create the most effective technology plan based on their specific needs, visit **CDW Healthcare**.