

HME News

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER FOR HOME MEDICAL EQUIPMENT PROVIDERS

FOR TECH, BENEFITS OUTWEIGH COSTS

BY EDDY HSU

2016 IS proving to be another exciting year for information technology in the HME industry. Technology continues to expand into all aspects of the human experience, and it is making increasingly aggressive inroads into health care, specifically for HME providers. While technology offers many significant benefits, it can also burden HME providers with increased costs. To keep up, physician practices, as well as HME providers, must continually invest in additional technology while simultaneously looking for cost-saving measures to balance things out.

LET TECHNOLOGY EASE YOUR PAIN

In health care and HME, as in just about every business and industry, consumers are looking for new technology that will make their lives better or make tasks easier for them to accomplish. Today, when patients visit a medical practice, they expect that their doctors utilize the latest technology, and they expect to be able to access their appointments, personal information and history by having access to a patient portal.

Similarly, your customers expect you to be technologically savvy. They expect you to be able to instantly access their information and determine whether the products

they need are in stock and, if not, when they will be. Having a fully-functional patient information system is crucial, but so is an excellent inventory control system. Your customers don't want to see you rifling through paperwork to find out when you can get their wheelchair—they expect you to be able to access that information instantly on your computer.

With the constantly-expanding documentation requirements, you also need more tech to drive your business operations. Having software that ensures your employees follow the proper documentation and delivery procedure increases your reimbursement rate and can virtually eliminate rejections based on simple mistakes.

Without a doubt, the greatest challenge facing HME providers today is increased billing pressure and decreasing rates of reimbursement. Technology is the single easiest way to reduce the billing burden and increase the revenue you can capture. Of course implementing new technology can be daunting for you and your employees, but once it's up and running, the return on investment only goes up.

PROVIDE PATIENTS WITH ACCESS

In addition to using technology during healthcare visits, patients are increasingly using technology to monitor their own health 24-7. They increasingly access patient portals to access data and information from their physician's offices and pharmacies. Although there are patient segments that still expect to speak with providers and retailers face-to-face, large numbers of people are becoming comfortable with electronic communication via patient portals, smartphone apps, and online ordering.

These progressive patients are excited about the opportunity to monitor every aspect of their health and transmit their health data seamlessly to healthcare providers via Bluetooth. The catch is that they expect their healthcare providers, including HME providers, to provide them with constant access to their health data, pending orders, reorder status and more.

Thus, in addition to having software for you and your employees to seamlessly monitor patient records and inventory, HME providers are increasingly seeking

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opportunities to do online ordering with real-time information regarding in-stock and on-order items. At the very least, every HME provider should have the option for online ordering for existing customers in the system for cash items and items that can be completed without extensive new documentation.

ARE YOU SECURE?

With more digital data comes the risk of security breaches. Even at the advent of electronic health records, healthcare businesses and patients alike had major concerns about the security of their health data. Today, electronic health records are pervasive, cataloguing significant data on every patient's health and history. While this supports the delivery of health care, it also puts patients at risk.

Even the most savvy healthcare consumers are concerned about the transfer of digital health files, so you need to have solutions in place to reassure them of your security. Digital security measures are going to be an even more significant concern in 2016 as IT in the HME industry must adapt to the changing conditions of modern healthcare. [HME](#)

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