

## Creating a Culture of Clinician Satisfaction With a Plan That Includes an Easy-To-Use EHR

### Clinician Satisfaction Leads to Less Recruiting Issues and Higher Patient Satisfaction

When Josh Adams took over as CEO of Ohioans Home Healthcare in 2011, he realized that employee satisfaction would be central to the agency's success.

"When we started out, we had a small group of employees who had all worked together at another agency, just six or seven of us," recalls Kimberly Schmeltz, RN, Director of Operations at Ohioans Home Healthcare. "Josh and the team realized the importance of keeping those people happy. From our previous experience, we saw such a positive difference when we had a nurse who loved her job and enjoyed her work."

A few years after taking the reins at the Perrysburg, Ohio-based home healthcare agency, Adams and other leaders noticed that many of the homecare nurses were using big plastic bins to transport reams of paperwork. The leaders figured that the nurses simply couldn't be happy with the situation.

"They would carry around these washbasins stacked full of paperwork, blank paperwork, half-filled-out paperwork, sheets of paper with various notes scribbled on them," said Schmeltz.

This practice prompted leaders to examine the nurses' day-to-day work lives more closely – and they discovered just how difficult clinical documentation had become for their field staff. In fact, they realized the need to improve clinical documentation practices so that nurses could more keenly focus their attention on patients.

The obvious solution to this documentation dilemma? An electronic health records (EHR) system. But the agency couldn't just adopt any EHR – as many of these systems

are difficult to use and unpopular with clinicians. Instead, leaders sought to adopt an EHR that clinicians could be trained on quickly and would result in a high level of user adoption and ultimately increased employee satisfaction.

"We needed to have a smooth transition to an electronic system for our field staff. We were working with nurses who had never done any form of electronic charting and we were transferring them from their paper and pencils to learning to use a device and software," Schmeltz said.

After examining several options, Ohioan leaders decided to implement an EHR from DeVero – citing its ease of use as one of the key deciding factors. "It's very user friendly. The initial training with our nurses only took about an hour. The screens in the DeVero system are just so simple. The nurses only see what they need to see, it's just very simplistic for them," Schmeltz said.

Indeed, after training the nurses on the system a few years ago, the EHR has been widely adopted for clinical documentation. "So, the nurses no longer need to fill the washbasins up with paper. They just grab their iPads and they are good to go," Schmeltz said.

#### *Bring on the benefits*

Getting rid of the awkward pink receptacles is just one of many benefits that have emanated from the EHR. Ohioans is also experiencing:

*More streamlined documentation.* "With the electronic system in place, the nurses have said goodbye to the all the paper disorganization that they had been dealing with. Now, they can simply document care on their iPads and they are done," Schmeltz said. In addition, these

## About Ohioans Home Health Care

Ohioans Home Healthcare was founded in 2007. In May 2011, the current management team was developed to make the organization what it is today. With over 25 years of combined industry experience, the vision of the company has always remained the same – to provide outstanding, quality care and customer service for clients within the comfort of their own homes. Since inception, they've added four additional branch locations, servicing 31 counties throughout Ohio and Michigan.

on-site capabilities make it easier for nurses to more accurately document care.

*Improved overall agency workflow.* Several of the nurses live several hours away from headquarters, which meant they had to travel long distances to courier the paperwork to the office. With the EHR in place, clinical documentation is sent electronically, making it possible to streamline the entire coding and billing process.

*Enhanced patient care.* DeVero has created customized forms that perfectly match up with the specific needs of Ohioans nurses, enabling nurses to more keenly focus on patient care. "So, when a nurse arrives in a home, she can just quickly fill out what she needs to and then turn her attention to the patient," Schmeltz said. "She's not spending a lot of time on back-end processes or trying to figure out how to navigate the system. She can just focus on the patient while she is there."

Being able to do so resonates with the type of nurses who work at Ohioans. "We attract nurses who want to be nurses for the right reasons. They want to provide one-on-one patient care, and went to nursing school because they really wanted to see people improve and see the outcomes," Schmeltz said. "A nurse in a hospital might get to see a patient for one or two days. But here at Ohioans, the nurses get to see the patient from beginning to end and leave the patients when they have reached a state of independence."

*Improved customer service.* The EHR also is used to track patient satisfaction. "We call every patient within 48 hours of opening their case to make sure everything is going well, that their nurse is a good match and that they're satisfied so far. We use tracking and reporting

systems in DeVero to manage all of that," Schmeltz said.

Experience the right kind of growth  
The utilization of the EHR is one factor that is helping the agency continue to grow while it stays true to its vision of unparalleled employee satisfaction. In fact, the agency has grown from just seven employees serving 50 patients in 2011 to more than 350 employees who serve about 2,500 patients today.

This growth, however, is occurring in an environment where employees are truly satisfied with the care experience. In 2015 and 2016, Ohioan finished on top of the Toledo area's midsize companies category in The Blade's Top Workplaces competition.

The agency is also finding that it is easier to recruit nurses, even as other care providers struggle to attract clinical staff. "Being a nurse, I get e-mails and calls every day from organizations offering huge incentives, sign-on bonuses and other perks. It makes me smile because we don't have to go that far. We don't feel desperate for staff. In fact, about 85% of our new employees come to us as a referral from somebody else," Schmeltz said.

Such satisfaction is contagious – as patients also seem to be happy with the care they are receiving. "The same type of word of mouth is helping with patients. They're going to their doctors' offices and saying great things about their nurse. Everywhere they go, they're talking about how their nurse helps them or some experience that they had. That word of mouth has been great for us," said Schmeltz who pointed out that patient satisfaction surveys published on the CMS Home Health Compare sites indicate that 88% of Ohioan patients recommend the agency to friends and family, compared to a 78% national average, and 74% for the state of Ohio. "This is what we set out to accomplish years ago. We knew that if we concentrated on making our clinicians happy, we could make our patients happy – and our agency would grow. But perhaps most important, we projected that our agency would grow by offering a high-quality patient care experience and that is exactly what has happened," Schmeltz concluded.

## About DeVero

A Netsmart solution, DeVero delivers intelligent, adaptable technology that revolutionizes healthcare data capture, management and integration for healthcare at home organizations. Based in Silicon Valley and founded by tech and healthcare experts, DeVero was born to create innovative solutions to common business challenges.