## Cutting Costs of Referrals

**EmCare®**

A recent webinar hosted by *Becker's Hospital Review* discussed the importance of managing the physician referral process. Key benefits of having an enhanced referral process include cost savings and better patient experience.

The session focused on improving two main models of referrals: many-to-one, which has a hospital or facility as a central cog, and many-to-many, which is on the outpatient side and includes many physicians referring patients to one another.

In both models, an unmanaged referral process can lead to delays in care, medical errors, wasted resources, lower patient satisfaction rates and lower rates of referrals and hospital admissions.

Often, poor communication is at the heart of any unmanaged referral process.

"The problem of poor communication also extends to what can be termed 'just-in-time' information," said Francisco Loya, MD, CEO of EmCare Hospital Medicine. "Some information is communicated at the point of transition, however, it may not be written down by the receiving physician due to a number of distractions the receiving physician may be experiencing during the handoff and may end up getting lost."

**Suggested Solutions for Improving the Referal Process**

*For many-to-many referrals, hospitals should:*

- Enhance communication between physicians
- Create a sense of "stickiness" in the overall referral network; and
- Expand the referral footprint

EmCare's Consult and Referral Management App, or CARMA, is one tool that may help improve the many-to-many referral process. CARMA allows providers to establish a trusted network of providers, connect with other providers within and outside the network, collaborate with patients for continuity of care and communicate and share data securely.

*For many-to-one referrals, hospitals should:*

- Reduce emergency department wait times and overcrowding
- Enhance patient satisfaction; and
- Improve the quality and continuity of care

EmCare's Direct Admit System for Hospitals, or DASH, is a possible solution for many-to-one referrals in that it allows providers to access and enter patient information, communicate in real time with other providers and track patients throughout the care process.

Both tools, Dr. Loya noted, enable multiple stakeholders in the care process to communicate simultaneously, which streamlines the admission process and improves patient flow and patient satisfaction.

Source: Becker's Hospital Review
Image credit: EmCare Hospital Medicine

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