Solution ER Overcrowding: Tele-triage

With unpredictable rises in Emergency Department use, one Florida health system brainstormed to develop a strategy to deal with the unexpected volume. The solution was to control surges by combining triage with telemedicine.

Aiming to offset overcrowding in the Emergency Department, Baptist Health South Florida in Coral Gables developed what it called a "TeleTriage" programme to control the flow.

How it works is the programme enables patients to connect with doctors via video conferencing moving them through the Emergency Department (ED) more swiftly. Critically, this increases the facility's ED capacity.

Rodolfo Lopez, manager of IT telehealth systems at Baptist Health told *Hospital and Health Networks (H&HN)* in a video interview.

Through the programme it was necessary to establish closer links between clinicians and remote physicians. The ED nurse was responsible for both greeting the patient and explaining the process of the tele-triage technology.

See Also: Telemedicine Enables Endocrinologist Visits for Diabetic Prisoners

The remote doctor is able to give the patient their undivided attention through being removed from the chaotic and distracting atmosphere that is typical of an ED unit.

The programme also offers doctors further time to examine medical records and patient histories in order to decide on the best possible course of action, Lopez added.

To date, Lopez explained to H&HN, patients affected by chest pain, minor head injuries or abdominal pain are among those benefiting the most from the triage system.

"Any time you can get to see a doctor faster when you get to the ED, right there you already feel that you're going to be taken care of," he told H&HN.

As well as avoiding overcrowding, telemedicine helps overcome barriers to care access for low-income and at-risk patients.

Lopez was presented with a Most Wired Innovator Award for the programme at the 2016 Health Forum American Hospital Association Leadership Summit.

Source: *Hospital and Health Networks (H&HN)* i
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