

Evaluating benefits is an important component of the connecting South West Ontario (cSWO) Program that helps to support and demonstrate the realization of health system benefits through the adoption of electronic health records (EHRs). By pursuing the measurement of organizational value (improvements in the efficiency of care delivery such as time-savings and redirected resources) and clinical value (patients undergo fewer unnecessary tests, patients have improved access to care), patients ultimately benefit from higher quality, better informed clinical decision-making.

The cSWO Analysis and Research program uses a research-based approach to identify areas of clinical best practice that are affected by the use of EHRs, and works collaboratively with clinicians to understand the value of EHRs. This formative evaluation process informs change management and adoption, and enables clinicians to use EHRs more effectively. This research does not include the use of any personal health information.

This document is one in a series of case studies which describe the clinical value of EHRs in different clinical settings and contexts, particularly with respect to clinical best practices. The work of the cSWO Analysis and Research program is ongoing; depending on the circumstance, these cases occasionally raise questions for further investigation, and clinicians are invited to participate in analysis and research to continue to develop these answers.

Value statement

Access to electronic health records (EHRs) through the cSWO Regional Clinical Viewer, ClinicalConnect™, supports the health care team at Pearl and Pine Retirement Home in providing quality coordinated care for their residents.

Offering medical services in retirement homes provides resident value

Retirement homes provide a variety of organized medical services ranging from exclusive on-site physician groups to open models of community-based attending physicians. There also appears to be a small physician workforce engaged in the care of residents, and some have suggested that physician staffing patterns can be important influences on the quality of care.¹

The Pearl and Pine Retirement, of Signature Retirement Living, offers its residents the option of additional assistance and/or on-site care 24/7, either on a short term or long term basis. Depending on the resident's needs, this may include personal health care from a team of qualified health professionals who provide medication administration, care planning and on-site access to a primary care physician.²

Electronic Health Records enable coordinated care in retirement homes

The registered practical nurses (RPNs) at Pearl and Pine Retirement Home access ClinicalConnect in many aspects of their day-to-day activities, as described below, including: new resident intake, medication administration, supporting discharges/returns from hospital stays, and respite care. The team has been encouraged to check ClinicalConnect, wherever appropriate, to get a better understanding of the residents' histories to ensure quality of care.

- 1) New Resident Intake - ClinicalConnect is accessed as part of the new intake assessment to obtain a better overall understanding of the resident's needs. This also enables them to avoid unnecessary duplicate testing, such as a chest x-ray which is required for all new intakes if one has not been completed in the last 90 days.
- 2) Medication Administration – Medications are dispensed for approximately 30 per cent of the residents in the home. Being able to access the medications information in ClinicalConnect enables the RPNs to identify potential discrepancies and reach out to the appropriate prescriber for clarification. One example given was where a resident had been prescribed an antibiotic for a potential urinary tract infection (UTI). As the antibiotic would conflict with the resident's blood pressure medication, the RPN first checked the test results to confirm

if there was a UTI before proceeding with administering the antibiotics. It also allows them to provide education to the residents on the medications being taken relative to their condition.

- 3) Return from Hospital Stay - Access to the resident’s lab work and consult notes indicates where extra care may be needed upon a resident’s return from a hospital stay, allowing the team to more easily setup a care plan and prepare for the arrival in advance. This in turn, also helps avoid readmissions as a result of the increased knowledge of the resident’s needs.
- 4) Respite Care - The team is able to obtain more details about the resident’s care needs so they can ensure any necessary assistive devices are on-hand before arrival.



Figure 1: EHR access - benefits for retirement homes

Prior to having access to ClinicalConnect, “it was always a challenge getting up-to-date information amongst the many different doctors and specialists our residents saw in hospital”. The team would have to follow-up with the various health service providers and hospital labs to get the results, which could take considerable time and manual effort, impacting their ability to be pro-active in meeting their resident’s health care needs.

Testimonials

“Patient records, viewable in ClinicalConnect, give the clinicians here the most current insights on what care needs are to be expected upon a resident’s return from hospital. Now nurses can not only reconcile medications, but they are able to verify and fact check any, and/or, all information being relayed to them from family members and residents. Having access to discharge summaries, labs and consults make it easier to provide our residents the quality care they require.”

Dr. Curran-Blaney, Resident Physician, Pearl and Pine Retirement Home

Questions

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Sources

¹ Caprio, T. (2006). Physician Practice in the Nursing Home: Collaboration with Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants. *Annals of Long-Term Care*, 14(3), 17-24.

² Pearl & Pine Retirement by Signature. (2018). Retrieved from: <https://signatureretirementliving.com/about-us/services-guarantee/>