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Teresea Higham
Centerstone Research Institute

IMPROVING PATIENT ENGAGEMENT WITH HIPAABRIDGE

Everbridge had the opportunity to participate in a pilot program with Nashville, Tenn.-based Centerstone Research Institute, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving healthcare through innovative approaches to integrating research and technology with clinical practice. The program, named coactionHealth, was designed to identify and measure how mobile technology and healthcare applications can improve the health and well-being of high-utilizing Medicaid patients with behavioral issues.

coactionHealth provided iPhones, preloaded with a selection of health apps, including HipaaBridge, to over 100 Medicaid patients, and encouraged them to use these apps to communicate and engage regularly with their “wellness coaches.” The pilot program was a resounding success. In addition to improving patient and provider communication and engagement, the use of HipaaBridge and the other applications reduced their emergency room visits by 39 percent and inpatient hospital days by 53 percent.

We had the chance to sit down with Christina VanRegenmortar, Director of the Center for Clinical

Excellence and National Policy at CRI, and Teresea Higham, a Wellness Coach at CRI, to discuss the program in more detail.



Reduction in **number of emergency room visits**



Reduction in the **number of inpatient hospital days**



Significant improvement in **Patient-Provider Communication**

“ The centerpiece app, to monitor patient moods, was HipaaBridge a texting and telemedicine app from communications technology vendor Everbridge”

– “Smartphone-based behavioral health program cuts ER use in Ind., Tenn. Medicaid populations”, **MedCity News**

TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT WHY CRI DECIDED TO INITIATE THIS MOBILE HEALTH-FOCUSED STUDY?

Christina: In April 2014 we teamed up with a few organizations to create an innovative program to research how mobile technology can enhance the lives of patients with some of the most severe and complex behavioral health conditions. This entailed giving patients smartphones with mobile applications that were designed to improve their ability to interact with their healthcare providers. HipaaBridge was one of the most exciting smartphone applications for patients in this study because it provided the patients with a way to text and video chat with their wellness coaches whenever they needed support or reassurance.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING FINDINGS ON HOW THE PATIENTS USED THE SMARTPHONES AND HIPAABRIDGE?

Teresea: Really, it was how quickly our patients became comfortable with the smartphones and wanted to use the apps frequently. In the beginning, the patients were using the apps, including HipaaBridge, at all hours of the day and night, every day. You could just see it in their eyes, or hear it in their voices when we were communicating how much they enjoyed engaging with us via a simple text message. We actually had to institute some boundaries on when they can contact us, depending on the severity level of their need, because they enjoyed the phones so much.

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST BENEFICIAL FEATURE OF USING HIPAABRIDGE DURING THE PILOT?

Teresea: I think the most beneficial aspect of HipaaBridge is the convenience of being able to send and receive updates with patients in real-time. Patients would use the application to send me text or picture messages sharing their feelings or progress, and HipaaBridge allowed me to be in multiple places at once. I could be on my way to visit one patient who needs a significant level of care that day, and while in route, be able to check in with someone

who is having a good day – and they just wanted to share their progress, which we encourage.

Simple things would be sent to me, like “I’m okay. I’m at the doctor. He said this. I just needed to let you know that so I don’t forget. I don’t really need to talk to you, but I want you to know this.” It may not seem like much, but it was very helpful for them to have this outlet, since they were not used to being able to text in the past. I think HipaaBridge makes them feel comfortable and in touch with their mental health team. They know that they have someone who is listening to them.

WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES, IF ANY, THAT YOUR PATIENTS FACED IN USING THE SMARTPHONES?

Teresea: Well, given that we had roughly sixty patients in the pilot, there were some preference issues. By this I mean that some patients preferred to text, while others dealt better with talking face-to-face via the video capabilities. But overall, this wasn’t a big issue. The flexibility and different options of HipaaBridge allowed us to successfully tailor our conversations, check-ins, etc. to the patient.

HOW CAN OTHER ORGANIZATIONS LEARN FROM THIS TRIAL?

Teresea and Christina: If there is one takeaway that other healthcare organizations can learn, it’s that mobile applications definitely provide high-utilizer patients with an alternative to seeking care through a trip to the emergency room. When it comes to those suffering through extreme mental challenges, such as paranoia or schizophrenia, many times our patients just wanted to check in with their team of wellness coaches. It provides an amazing level of comfort for patients. Being able to pick up a smartphone, press a button on HipaaBridge and securely speak face-to-face with us was a game-changer for them. Being able to say, “I’m checking in. I took my medicine today.” Or, “I’m not feeling well today, the voices are really loud today,” and then having us be able to immediately talk them through what’s best for them is immensely valuable.

About Everbridge

Everbridge is a leading unified critical communications platform trusted by corporations and communities of all sizes that need to reach the right people for immediate action, collaboration, and decision-making. Connecting millions of people and internet-connected devices, the company provides reassurance that secure, compliant messages are delivered, locally and globally, received and responded to, no matter the recipient’s location. Everbridge is based in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Beijing and London.

For a full product description, along with best practices and product details please see the Everbridge User Guide and Everbridge University.

