Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Business Builder: Make Savvy Use Of Technology To Ensure Person-Centered Care

Annihilate staff/resident resistance to its incorporation by using these field-tested strategies.

There are so many challenges facing long term care givers that you simply cannot ignore the help you can get to ensure you meet expectations of person-centered care. At the recent **Leading Age** annual conference, the "Integrating Technology for Person-Centered Care" session was an eye opener for those who have not yet taken advantage of smart tech.

In addition to the rising age and acuity levels of residents, many providers are finding that they must deal with increasingly tech savvy residents and their adult family members who expect communities to offer the latest technology as part of their care, notes **Bryce Porter,** national senior living manager of **Intel-GE Care Innovations** in Roseville, Calif. "The question for many of you is, 'How can you meet these demands and improve outcomes in a way that is financially sustainable?' And we believe that great technology, particularly smart sensor technology, is an important part of the solution," Porter says.

Be On The Cutting Edge

Sheri Peifer, senior vice president of innovation and strategic development for **Eskaton** in Carmichael, Calif., agrees. "We have discovered how to use technology as a tool to actually serve and support the people we care for each day. We look at what's out there on the landscape now to see how people, especially the boomers, are currently using technology. Because this is what they are going to be expecting us to provide today for their parents and tomorrow as our future customers," Peifer explains.

Get smart! And what's out there now are products and services that use smart technology to discern the user's personal preferences. "Things like Netflix, Pandora and Amazon know our behavior and then use this to personalize our experiences. For providers of elder care services this same technology can help us get to know and understand our customers better, thereby guiding and directing us towards intervening more appropriately and providing person-centered care," Peifer emphasizes.

Some of the smart technologies that Eskaton has installed in its residences include gaming technologies that can be individualized, an eLiving resident portal that can be configured and customized to the person, and passive motion monitoring called Intel-GE Care Innovations ™ QuietCare®. Care Innovations™ QuietCare® is a sensor-based technology for use in senior living facilities. The technology solution learns the daily activity patterns of residents and sends alerts to help caregivers respond to potentially urgent situations.

Anticipate Resistance From All Sides

Although some people will embrace the introduction of more technology into your community, not everyone relishes the idea of change. Some staff members, as well as residents and family members, may not understand what the technology can or cannot do and be suspicious of its introduction into the community. "The greatest challenge that we find in healthcare and senior living is you frequently bump up against the status quo and how people have always done business. People are resistant to change," notes Porter.

Common fears: For instance, staff may think that the new technology is simply going to add to their workload rather than help them do their jobs more effectively. Residents may think that the technology is "spying on them" and recording what they are doing. And family members may be concerned that the community is replacing caregivers with machines.

Equip Staff With Knowledge/Support

If you are going to reap the benefits of your investment in technology, you must proactively anticipate and address concerns of all of your constituents. One of the things that Eskaton has done to ensure a successful deployment of new technology is develop a Guidebook which is given to staff.

Great tool: The Guidebook includes several components to help the staff feel like they are equipped with all the tools to handle the new technology, explains **Kaitlin Cuffe,** project coordinator of strategic initiatives for Eskaton in Carmichael, Calif. Included in this guidebook is a review of the technology, a listing of the peers within the organization that staff can call upon for assistance, a description of roles and responsibilities, and a clear description of the role of the use of the technology within each community.

"We also review the installation process of any new technology, because it is an area which can be stressful for staff and residents alike. It's important to minimize the disturbance of residents as much as possible and be clear about how much time is going to be involved. We have found that it's better to overestimate the amount of time you will be in a resident's room, because if they expect you to be there for 30 minutes, but you are out of there in 15 minutes, then you're a good guy," Cuffe advises.

Eskaton also makes certain to hold several meetings with staff prior to the installation of any new technology. "We want to equip staff with all the right tools. We provide them with laminated talking points that they can attach to their keys so they can quickly answer resident questions about the technology," Cuffe notes.

Proper staff training is crucial, Porter adds, since technology is only as good as the folks who are using it. "You need to connect with the staff during the training process to really show them and have them recognize how the new technology provides value and how it helps them do their job better. This can't just be something that is being forced on them from the top down. Otherwise, staff will just stop using the technology and go back to doing things the old way," he warns.

Reel In Residents/Families

In addition to staff training and meetings, communication with residents and families is also key, emphasizes **Lois Roland,** executive director of **Eskaton Village Roseville,** in Roseville, Calif. Prior to the installation of the QuietCare® passive motion system, Eskaton sent out letters to all of its residents and families and scheduled meetings for them to attend.

Defeat misperceptions: A common concern of family members is that introduction of new technology will lead to the elimination of existing services and reduction in staff levels. "Once I assured them that this was not something that was going to happen ⬜ that this new technology was in addition to the services that we already had, then they were on board," Roland notes.

Another service that Eskaton is providing to help its residents with new technologies is to create a tech desk, explains Peifer. Eskaton's tech desk strives to provide technical support for any connected device for their residents.

Reap Competitive Advantages

Outsmart the competition: Looking to the future, the ultimate goal for long-term care providers is not simply to install new technologies, but to create a culture of innovation, says Porter. "A simple difference that we've found between good providers and great providers is that good providers address resident needs in a timely manner, whereas great providers have the ability to anticipate resident needs. Now, that's a subtle but significant difference. Providers that have the ability to anticipate resident needs are able to significantly impact the resident's health and overall satisfaction, leading to a strong competitive advantage," Porter concludes.