OASIS Alert

Studies & Surveys: TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE DISAPPOINTS MANY AGENCIES

POS vs. paper may be the wrong OASIS C question to ask.

If you are completing the OASIS C assessment on a point of service system, your agency is still among the minority in home care.

A recent study, "The BlackBerry Report: The National State of the Home Care Industry," released Oct. 10 at the **National Association for Home Care & Hospice's** annual conference in Los Angeles, says 40 percent of agencies use some POS system in the field.

Use varies by size of the agency, with 28.9 percent of HHAs with Medicare revenue of $1 million or less use POS; 39.8 percent of agencies between $1 million and $5 million dollars use POS; and 61.5 percent of HHAs over $10 million use POS, according to **Robert Fazzi**, of **Fazzi Associates** in Northampton, Mass., who reported on the initial analysis of the findings.

Electronic Medical Records Boon To OASIS C?

The most direct technological advantage as it relates to OASIS C is for agencies in health care systems with integrated electronic medical records (EMR), says operational consultant **Karen Vance** with **BKD** in Springfield, Mo. These agencies are in a position to access significantly more detailed EMR and health histories for immunization records, etc., she explains.

Hidden trap: Larger agencies using POS often have the same issues with timeliness, completeness and accuracy that smaller paperbased agencies do, Vance reports. What matters more is the agency's management model and emphasis on accountability, she adds.

And many agencies are having trouble with changes and patches designed to make the software work for OASIS C, reports **Pam Warmack** with **Clinic Connections** in Ruston,La. Agencies should "keep a paper version of their data until computer/software failures are resolved," she advises.

A surprising number of people "do not trust technology" and revert back to manual tracking, especially in back offices, Vance says. And many agencies are finding software "look back" tools for answering OASIS C process questions are not very easy to use, reports **Sharon Litwin** with **5 Star Consultants** in Ballwin, Mo.

Just over 65 percent of agencies report having EMR systems, but 81 percent of these agencies "still maintain some level of paper charts," according to the BlackBerry report. Still, 83 percent of those using EMR systems agree that using these has improved the quality of care coordination, the report says.

Seventy-two percent of HHAs use "back office" software systems for billing and other fiscal support. But many agencies are dissatisfied with the product they have. More than 21 percent of agencies plan to get new systems in the next year and a surprising 40.5 percent said they plan to go with a new vendor, Fazzi reported.

Warning: Don't expect the grass to be greener elsewhere unless you have researched the specific elements you are looking for that are missing in your current system, Vance says. Figure out what will help you and work with your vendor to get it, experts suggest.

Of the 13.3 percent of agencies that report they will be buying new POS hardware, 36.8 percent say they are looking to

purchase handheld systems, the study found, even though only 3.6 percent of POS hardware currently being used is handhelds. More than 66 percent of current POS users have laptops, while 24.6 percent have tablet or notebook systems, the report points out.

Note: **Research in Motion Limited**, **Hospital Home Care Association of America**,NAHC, and Fazzi Associates sponsored the study. They surveyed 900 senior executives representing agencies in all segments of the home care industry.