As demand for care increases, many hospitals and health systems are already struggling with high bed-occupancy rates, providing timely care access and aligning patients with the most appropriate level care at the right time.

For example, a patient may visit the emergency department when their condition could have been treated at an urgent care facility; or another patient may be sent home to wait for an open bed when another affiliated hospital has availability; or yet another patient could wait unnecessarily for a physician appointment when a telemedicine visit with a nurse practitioner could have easily resolved the health concern.

Certainly, many organizations need physical expansion to increase their bed count. For most other providers, however, especially health systems spread over large geographic areas, better visibility over the enterprise’s facility capacity and provider availability across a broad range of care venues is a less costly strategy to align patients with the needed care, helping avoid care delays and emergency department overutilization, while improving the provider’s and patient’s experience.

Air traffic control for healthcare

Many health systems are integrating call center operations with their transfer centers to help referring physicians, emergency departments and patients find an appropriate care venue, whether that is an urgent-care, mental health facility or at the patient’s home. Like an air traffic control tower for an airport, a well-run, efficient patient transfer center utilizes a highly trained team supported with integrated, predictive and enterprise-wide information technology tools to guide patients as well as physicians inside and outside the health system.

Transfer centers offer several benefits to hospitals and health systems, including patient retention, reduced network leakage, cost savings and increased revenue.

Helping patients navigate the care continuum also leads to higher quality care, better outcomes and fewer adverse events. Transfer center operations also play a major role in physician, employee and patient satisfaction. A poorly run transfer center can be a source of frustration for all three groups. As a result, physicians may hesitate to send their patients to a hospital, employee recruitment and retention suffer, and poor patient experience can harm its reputation.

That is why, like an air traffic control center, speed and efficiency are two of the hallmarks of a well-run transfer center. Well-designed, easy-to-use dashboards give transfer
center navigators fast access to data. Having the most up-to-date information about system capacity and on-call physicians also speeds the time from first contact to appropriate care.

**Drive safe and effective care access decisions**

Only 9 percent of ED visits result in a hospital admission. Most patients are treated and released while others are treated at a different facility and some patients do not require any medical treatment, but rather need behavioral or mental health support. In these situations, transfer centers play a vital role in collaborating with emergency providers to find the appropriate care venue.

Actionable, high-quality, real-time data also helps users make efficient, informed decisions as they refer, admit, and move patients throughout the health system. Leading transfer-center technology delivers quantifiable, easily interpretable results that allow swift, accurate decisions based on individual patient needs, doctor availability, and the ability to accommodate new patients.

Such data includes comprehensive visibility into the patient’s history, including conditions, medications and past encounters. It can provide a comprehensive, easy-to-interpret array of physicians and facilities that are available to treat the patient. In some cases, the best transfer solution is to keep the patient away from the emergency department or urgent care facility. Transfer centers can help with that, too, by facilitating telehealth services.

**Automation to drive personalized service**

Standardized and optimized processes ensure every patient receives optimal care and experience. Automation helps improve transfer-center employee satisfaction, too. When fields are auto-populated, navigators spend less time on repetitive tasks and switching between multiple screens and systems. They have everything they need on one highly intuitive dashboard.

Automating the workflow can also support rather than supplant the human element behind transfer operations. The technology can create rules that automatically alert a patient’s primary care physician at each step along the way, for example. Electronic transportation orders and autofill forms that populate information about patients such as medication lists, medical history, last seen details, and more, save time so transfer-center navigators and clinicians can find the best solution, customized for each patient.

Less time searching for and inputting data means the patient navigators can spend more time listening, using problem-solving skills and communicating, which results in a better service experience.

**Building the right team**

Technology alone can’t magically facilitate the perfect care transition, but it can help the people who work in the transfer center to better follow the processes that optimize patient transfers. When the technology is intuitive and easy to use and when employees have the right training as a foundation, the people who work in the transfer center are more productive.

The most important asset of any business—especially service organizations like transfer centers—is people. To succeed, you must have the right composition of personalities, skill sets, roles and training. Since transfer centers frequently serve patients and their families, training and assessing for interpersonal skills and service-focused attitude is essential.

That is because during a difficult time, patients and their loved ones will remember that they received the care they needed quickly and smoothly. Conversely, they’ll remember—and share with anyone who will listen—a negative experience. The patient and family don’t care about all the complex calculations that go into a successful transfer. They only want a quick resolution. They want to come out of the experience feeling well-cared for.
Supporting ROI

Healthcare leaders can use the real-time data that transfer-center technology captures to analyze both clinical and financial ROI. They can also use that data to pinpoint missed patient transfer opportunities and take corrective action to improve transfer rates over time.

Every hospital and health system leader wants to avoid patient care delays and obstacles to care while safely maximizing physician and facility capacity. Fortunately, processes and technology are available today that deliver the visibility to healthcare organizations that help them identify care facilities and providers that can serve patients immediately while ensuring that clinical teams have real-time data and updates to ensure safe and effective continuity and quality of care.

To learn more, visit rebrand.ly/optimizecare

About Central Logic

Managing patient transfers is a life-saving endeavor. Central Logic is a pioneer in the space and was founded to support this mission. Our flexible, purpose-built solutions provide superior real-time visibility and unmatched business intelligence to optimize the operations of health system transfer centers. Clients count on Central Logic to deliver strong growth, find new ways to improve patient outcomes and make their operations more effective, today and into the future. Based in Utah, Central Logic is an industry leader with a 95% customer retention rate. The company has been named a “fastest growing private company” by both Inc. 500 and Utah Business Magazine. For more information, visit www.centrallogic.com.