

Advocate Medical Group

Advocate Medical Group (AMG) is a physician-led medical group providing primary care, specialty services, medical imaging, outpatient services and community-based medical practices throughout Chicagoland and Bloomington/Normal. AMG is part of Advocate Health Care, the largest health system in Illinois and one of the largest health care providers in the Midwest.

Physician staff: 1,500

Locations: 350+

Contact center staff: 220

Transfer call volume:
10,000 messages/month

SUCCESS STORY

Chicago-based ACO and managed care organization strengthens continuity of care for patients

Advocate Medical Group (AMG), a Chicago-based medical group with more than 200 different practice sites, has a Managed Care Population Program (MCP) as part of their Accountable Care Organization.

The MCP handles risk-based financial contracts for the managed care population, and assumes the full financial risk of patient care. The program's utilization is managed by Lata Patel and Virginia Stasaitis.

Patel and Stasaitis work closely with the physicians in both Advocate Medical Group and Advocate Physician Partners to provide cost effective, quality care to reduce overall medical costs, and maintain continuity of care for patients who are high utilizers of services across various practices.

To ensure that costs are monitored closely and that patients continue to receive the levels of care their Advocate physicians provide, the Managed Care Population Program regularly communicates with other hospitals and healthcare facilities in the area, as well as Advocate physicians, to maintain members' healthcare needs within the insurance plan's network.

According to Stasaitis, accountable care organizations, and those working toward value-based care, need to have a mechanism in place to keep managed care population patients in network; not only to reduce medical costs, but to provide more comprehensive continuity of care, which is important for achieving improved outcomes.

A process filled with redundant steps

When one of the patients served by the MCPP program seeks medical care or treatment at an out-of-network facility, the staff at that facility contact Patel and Stasaitis' team, just as they would a traditional payer, to seek pre-qualification for the reimbursement of service fees.

Upon this notification, the team at MCPP works quickly to identify the clinical status of the patient, determine the financial risk involved and then, if it is safe to do so, arrange to transfer the patient to an in-network provider.

Before implementing PerfectServe to help coordinate patient care, out-of-network providers would call the notification line and leave a voice mail relaying the patient's clinical status and treatment needs. This line was manned by an agent who then retrieved the message and called the appropriate MCPP nurse. Subsequently, this nurse contacted an AMG provider, waited for a call back from the provider, and coordinated the transfer, admission and initial care of the patient.

It was a process filled with repeated calls and multiple messages that led to unnecessary follow-up work and delays in patient care.

Because of the need for more direct conversation, the MCPP needed another solution. "Conceptually," Stasaitis said, "the idea was that by using PerfectServe we would be able to reduce the amount of time it took for the right nurse to contact the right physician and begin to coordinate care."

Now, PerfectServe automatically identifies the nurse on duty, and provides the agent with the ability to leave a text message rather than needing to speak directly to the nurse. Additionally, the nurse can contact physicians more quickly by messaging them through PerfectServe's secure, cloud-based application. The solution has helped the MCPP team eliminate hours of wasted time, and guide more patients back to in-network hospitals where they can receive more comprehensive care.

Reduced time to treatment and direct communication with physicians

Today, with PerfectServe facilitating MCPP's communication process, instead of a lengthy communication workflow involving multiple parties and multiple

“PerfectServe reduces the need for lengthy call cycles because our nurses the physician directly.”

Lata Patel
manager, AMG Managed
Care Population Program

opportunities for communication breakdown, one message is all that is needed to quickly connect to the on-call nurse or physician who can help with transfer and admission.

Since using PerfectServe to expedite the process, the response time from the covering physician has been reduced by an average of 30 minutes. Patel says this applies to more than 60 patients each month.

The biggest benefit? The reduced time to treatment for Advocate patients.

“That reduction in time is one of the goals we were striving to achieve,” Stasaitis said. “If there is a delay in reaching physicians — or if there is no call back — the chances of the patient being admitted to an out-of-network hospital or receiving a delay in care are much greater.”

And by reducing the amount of time it takes to contact physicians, MCPP nurses are able to move more quickly and coordinate time-sensitive care when it is needed most.

Additional benefits of seamless schedule management and message tracking

Another benefit the MCPP team has realized since implementing PerfectServe is the ease with which they can manage the nurses’ three shift schedules.

“We have a unique shift schedule to manage for weekday mornings, weekday afternoons and weekends,” Patel said. “When schedules change, it’s less time consuming for us now to make updates and be able to see in real-time who is on call and when.”

Keeping track of the number of members who have been transferred to an in-network facility is an important metric to report for the MCPP team, which is tasked with ensuring the value and continuity of care while controlling costs. Because PerfectServe date and time stamps all incoming and outgoing messages, leadership can quickly calculate the number of patients treated for any specific timeframe.

Stasaitis said, “It’s a big benefit to have a history of the messages sent. So, when it’s necessary to follow a paper trail to address an issue or concern, I have an actual record of what was sent and when. Before PerfectServe, I didn’t have that capability.”

Continuity of care: The bottom line

When all things are considered, the biggest benefit PerfectServe offers AMG's Managed Care Population Program is the ability to quickly and efficiently bring patients back to in-network hospitals to ensure they continue to receive the high-value care Advocate Health Care is known for.

PerfectServe helps Patel and Stasaitis succeed in these efforts by reducing the amount of time it takes for the correct nurse to contact the correct admitting physician and begin to coordinate care for patients.