

## RESEARCH BRIEFING

# “The Perspectives of Home Health Agencies Regarding Communication and Care Coordination with Physicians and Health Systems”

### HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Telephones are still the top means of communications between home health and physicians from the home health side
- ▶ Significant barriers in communication between home health and physicians were associated with delayed orders and ED visits

### ▲ OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

This research, the first home health research grant funded by the Institute, aimed to shine further light on the effectiveness of communication between skilled home health care (SHHC) clinicians and physicians ordering SHHC. Previous peer-reviewed research by Boyd, et al found that physicians spend little time with the home health plan of care, designed to facilitate communication, resulting in physician's rarely making changes, significant or otherwise, to the plan. This suggested an existing barrier and challenge to communication between SHHC clinicians and physicians who order the home health episode.

The purpose of this research, then, was to interview SHHC staff to understand their perspective

on the current barriers and challenges, then use information gained through those interviews to create a nationally representative survey to assess communication with physicians from the point of view of SHHC frontline clinicians.

### ▲ RESULTS

Significant barriers to communications persist between SHHC clinicians and physicians, especially as they relate to the home health plan of care. In this digital age the overwhelming majority of SHHC clinicians still utilized telephones to reach physicians and found that the preponderance of physicians communicated through a third party. This is critical, as SHHC clinicians who reported being easily able to reach a physician during a routine visit or who worked with a greater number of physician practices were less likely to send a patient to the emergency department. SHHC clinicians who were able to be easily reach physicians during a routine visit were also less like to have orders delayed due to failed communication.

### ▲ IMPACT FOR HOME HEALTH CARE

Currently, the communication between SHHC and physicians face numerous challenges enumerated in the research and outlined above. These challenges may compromise care delivery and coordination and create undue burden and hurdles for SHHC and physicians. Improvements in administration, care planning, and SHHC order processes are needed to

improve care delivery for patients and reduce burden on clinicians.

New and innovative models should be explored to further engage and improve communication between SHHC and physicians.

Future work should focus on improving the culture of accountability between SHHC clinicians

and physicians. Making improvements to the administrative, care planning, and SHHC order processes need to be enacted to facilitate that culture. Approaches to engaging SHHC clinicians in research related to improving SHHC care delivery should be pursued.

## WHERE TO READ MORE

- Leff B, Boyd CM, Norton JD, et al. Skilled home healthcare clinicians' experiences in communicating with physicians: A national survey. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2021;1-8. doi:10.1111/jgs.17494
- Norton JD, Nkodo A, Nangunuri B, et al. Skilled Home Healthcare Clinician and Staff Perspectives on Communication With Physicians: A Multisite Qualitative Study. *Home Healthc Now.* 2021;39(3):145-153. doi:10.1097/NHH.0000000000000959

## ABOUT THE GRANT

The Research Institute's Home Health Research grant is the only grant dedicated solely to the betterment and understanding of care in the home. With more than a decade of sponsoring and providing integral education and research on the value of home health care to the U.S. health care system, the Institute, through the grant process, seeks to bring home health care research to the forefront and sow the seeds for critical research in the field that will help inform better care for patients now and for the future.

## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The Research Institute for Home Health is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, national consortium of home care providers and organizations foundation focused on improving access to and delivery care in the home. The Institute invests in research and education about home care and its ability to deliver quality, cost-effective, patient-centered care across the care continuum. The Institute is committed to conducting and sponsoring research and initiatives that demonstrate and enhance the value proposition that home care has to offer patients and the entire U.S. health care system.

## RESEARCHERS

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