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Noted at NAHC: Are You Ready?

by Liz Carey

You think you know what's coming, and then it comes, and it's not what you expected.

Kicking off the 2018 Home Care and Hospice Conference and Expo in Grapevine, Texas, this week, NAHC President Bill Dombi said his organization at first anticipated a minor year in terms of advocacy but true to the ever-changing weather of homecare, that wasn't how things turned out.

Regulatory projects reigned in 2018. Among the headaches cited included the 2020 Patient-Driven Groupings Model, the Review Choice Demonstration for Home Health Services, new Conditions of Participation and new Interpretive Guidelines.

Here forward? "As an outlet overall we do not see much in the way of legislation passing this year, but we do see it as a forerunner for activity in 2019," Dombi said. "Plan for preclaim review now; plan for a new payment model; plan for changes around quality of care standards; but also plan for the future."

Providers may or may not be taking part in innovative activities, such as bundling of services, integrated care through accountable care organizations, and newfound Medicare Advantage opportunities, but these new directions are also factors in the business of homecare today.

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On the private pay side, the host of issues centers mainly around wage and hour laws.

If you attended the conference or you've been part of NAHC, you may have already heard about NAHC 2.0. It is described as a cultural transformation to turn NAHC into a member-owned, member-driven organization, emphasizing member participation and collaboration with other

industry stakeholders to strengthen the industry and allow it to amplify its power by speaking with one voice on key issues.

According to the organization, the redesigned program has already yielded a number of important victories for home health and hospice providers and their patients, including, in 2018 alone:

- Home Health Groupings Model detoured
- Medicaid Community First Choice funding
- Home health rural add-on preserved
- Hospice Notice of Elections simplified
- Administrative burden reductions

NAHC says the policy successes amount to savings of almost \$29 billion over the next decade for home health and hospice.

As always, industry conferences are one of *the* places for peer-to-peer conversations about what's working and what's not, new products and business services, and each and every session designed to help educate providers. Here's a snapshot of my experience.

Good measures. A recent study by NAHC and its partners found that many providers are not aware of interoperability standards. As part of the survey, they were given a list that included HL7, FHIR and other APIs. More than half (54 percent) said they were not aware of any standards whatsoever. "The government is driving conversations around the common standards, but it's going to be companies like ours that will have to drive home and adopt the standards," Forcura founder and CEO Craig Mandeville said in the report. More to come.

Sellers beware. A two-part mergers, acquisitions and consolidation session by The Braff Group brought many. Navigating the sale of your business can get tricky. Recommended? Use an experienced transaction attorney. Meet the prospect face to face. Understand the type of sale to protect yourself against paying unnecessary taxes. Reps and warranty insurance is increasingly being utilized. Getting to the close, be careful how you halt the process. "Keep running the business like you're never going to sell it," said Braff Managing Director Mark Kulik.

Celebrate your value. With so many gotchas to worry about during the course of doing business, staying positive is a resounding theme. I was wowed when Wanda Coley of Well Care Health in the Carolinas described her IT champion, Ron, driving to the office during Hurricane Florence to keep the company's data center online. Ron's work is one of hundreds of ways employers can think of to highlight the good work of their teams and their organizations. How do you celebrate and articulate your value?

Set priorities. Speaking of value, NAHC is looking for ways to better serve private duty providers. Workforce issues persist we know. Tips offered during a Private Duty Home Care Association open forum included: paying slightly more than your the competition; scheduling hours right for your carers; finding a way for staff to grow in the agency; and developing a robust continuing education department. But I gathered there's much more to do—to serve providers and the people they employ. If you operate a private duty agency, send your needs, interests and ideas to NAHC.

Because of HomeCare magazine's history with medical equipment, we couldn't help but gravitate to those booths where such was featured. If we missed seeing you, drop us a line. What we saw: high interest in new technology.

The buzz is VOCSN from Ventec Life Systems, five therapies in one device. It's a hospital-to-home device combining the critical care ventilator, oxygen concentrator, cough assist, suction and nebulizer into one respiratory system. Frost & Sullivan recognized this product in 2017 with its innovation award. It is described as customizable, not all or nothing.



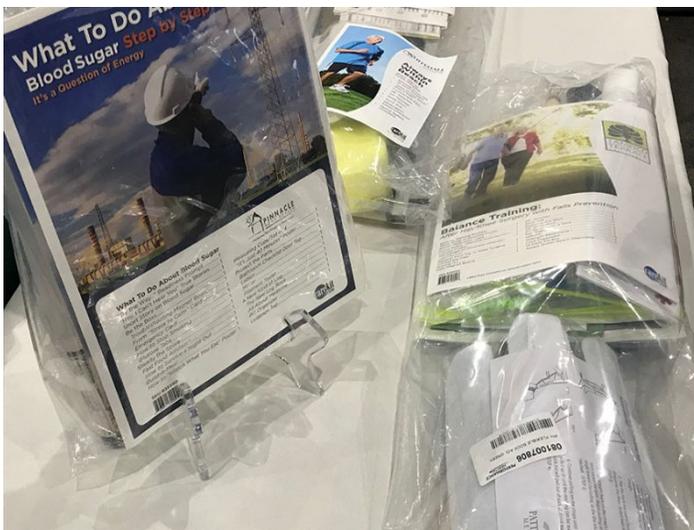
cue-Rx made a statement with its medication adherence and alert system. The product is out of Iota Communications (iota is short for internet of things access), and there's more to the story with this group, which recently materialized the expertise of Solbright Group Inc., an industrial AI, machine learning and energy management company, and M2M Spectrum Networks LLC, a national, dedicated IoT network access and solutions company. Part of the story behind the product is the carrier-grade wireless network system that employs FCC-licensed radio spectrum, Bluetooth low energy (BLE) and Wi-Fi-based beacons and sensors, from which any end-user application can access location, tracking or sensor-based data for inclusion into end-user management systems. Speaking of the end-user, this product is designed to hold multiple medications, it will let you know what's going on with your meds, and there's room for an inhaler.



Snap40 is working on its second-generation remote patient monitoring system that includes a home hub that works off Wi-Fi and cellular to communicate important info to the health care team. Right now, generation one looks like the phone sleeve my husband wears on his arm when he runs, but co-founder and CEO Christopher McCann says the product will be smaller and lighter in the near future. Snap40 is currently being utilized by a patient population in the Midwest, McCann said, but it has been through more paces to date over in the UK.



CareKits bring together a nice collection of real-world tools and patient education to take home at discharge. Designed as a transition-of-care solution, kits feature a take-home bundled product kit as well as a digital online resource, and the products are customizable. About 50 care directions to choose from here.



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