

Virtual contact centers improving hospital efficiency and patient care

The challenge

Healthcare systems in America are under pressure to deliver more care with fewer resources. Ensuring that infrastructure and processes are in place to prioritize care and maximize clinical capacity is a vital part of ensuring hospitals can run efficiently, ensuring financial viability and delivering a good patient experience.

How is Tunstall Americas virtual contact center helping hospitals in the New York Metro City region to improve patient access, and ensure appointments are optimized, as well as reducing the number of 'walk-in' patients?

What we did

Tunstall Americas has approximately 500 staff operating from its Rhode Island and Long Island City offices in New York, and has been serving USA healthcare providers for over 30 years. In addition to providing virtual contact centers for healthcare providers, Tunstall Americas also supplies medical alert/personal emergency response systems and works with pharmaceutical companies to support patients.

The contact center began its collaboration with hospitals by providing an out of hours answering service for outpatient teams, enabling patients to make contact at times most convenient to them. Following the success of this service, the contact center soon began to answer day time calls and work with other hospital departments. Tunstall Americas now answers all calls coming in to the hospitals it works with, including scheduling appointments, primary care, medication, paediatrics, eye, cardiology, radiotherapy and ambulance care network calls.

The contact center acts as the hospital's switchboard, with full access to their databases, 24 hours a day, backed up by a robust disaster recovery system. Operators are specially trained to follow dedicated protocols, which may vary from hospital to hospital, and can help patients with various tasks such as making appointments, insurance verification, and referrals to the emergency department.

All calls are answered within an average of 45 seconds, and in the event of an emergency (such as a heart attack) relevant clinicians can be directed to the ER in less than a minute. Outbound calls are also made to remind patients of upcoming appointments, reducing the number of missed appointments and increasing the fill rate for doctors' availability.

The center supports the full cycle of ambulatory care, from appointments to post-discharge, streamlining the process and freeing clinicians to focus on medical work rather than administration tasks.

“Our services integrate directly with our clients' scheduling and patient management systems to deliver improved quality and efficiency, and increased clinical productivity. We help to streamline care delivery, maximizing resource utilisation and enhancing patient satisfaction

Venkat Sathiyamoorthy, Senior Vice President, Connected Health, Tunstall Americas



Results

Of the 140 hospitals in the New York area, Tunstall Americas is preferred vendor to 138. It is one of the top medical answering services and the number one centralized appointment scheduling center for hospitals in NYC. The virtual contact center improves efficiency, achieving associated financial savings and the following benefits:

Centralised Appointment Scheduling

Gives patients' access to services at times convenient to them, 24 hours a day. This reduces the number of 'walk-in' patients as they are often directed to the help over the phone. Consultants' schedules are actively managed to increase productivity. Hospitals have real-time visibility of data to coordinate care.

Appointment Confirmation/Reminders

Outbound calls, texts and emails to confirm and remind patients about appointments, and the capacity for patients to reschedule appointments at any time reduces the number of missed appointments. **Within a few months of working with Tunstall a large Bronx hospital reduced its 'no show' rate for appointments by 30%.**

Daytime Overflow Calls

In the case of a hospital receiving more calls than it is able to handle, for example at peak times or if required as disaster recovery, the contact center can act as an overflow facility, increasing capacity and providing 24 hour access to patients. **A major hospital in Brooklyn was experiencing a very high abandon rate (20%) of their incoming calls. Within 60 days of working with Tunstall this figure had reduced to less than 5%.**

Financial Pre-screening

Identifying patients without viable insurance, and help them to access it prior to attending hospital, maximizing hospital revenue and minimizing wasted appointments.

Preregistration

Registering patients over the phone during appointment scheduling, checking the relevant documentation is in place, providing faster management of patients and increasing productivity of staff on the front desk.

Pre/Post Discharge Follow-Up Scheduling

A dedicated line for patients about to be or recently discharged to call to schedule appointments, removing the need for them to access this service at the front desk, and ensuring continuity of care

After Hours Support

The out of hours service takes messages to be relayed to the relevant office during business hours. Patients can be put through to an on call doctor 24 hours a day in the event of urgent health concerns, reducing the number of walk-ins.

Physician Referral Calls

Assistance for patients to access specialist doctors accepting their insurance, giving them faster access to care.

Page Operators

Dispatching overhead pages to the necessary department within the hospital for quicker resolution for any clinical needs, and handling critical codes to ensure relevant staff can arrive on time at ER to provide care.

Reporting and Surveys

Detailed reporting on the outcomes of the patient's calls as well as the reason for calling with data analysis to support informed decision making, providing valuable insights into patient needs and experience. Surveys to assess customer satisfaction with calls, hospital visits and appointment availability. Supports business intelligence and enhanced patient care.



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