

Home Health Industry's Technology Partners Continue Racing Toward AI

Joyce Famakinwa, Feb 01, 2024

Artificial intelligence is likely to be a hot topic in home-based care over the next few years. With that in mind, most companies in the space are already adjusting.

Post-acute technology company WellSky, for instance, has partnered with Google Cloud to leverage its artificial intelligence (AI) platform, Vertex AI. The partnership also includes Google Cloud's secure cloud technologies, advanced data analytics tools and machine learning capabilities.

The main goal of the partnership is to help providers, across the care continuum, address various challenges.

"The fact that we can partner with Google Cloud allows us to focus on what we are good at, which is bringing features and capabilities in solutions that are tailored for specific end markets, like home health, hospice, or other post acute-care care settings," Joel Dolisy, chief technology officer at WellSky, told Home Health Care News. "We can leverage existing building blocks that Google makes available to us."

Overland Park, Kansas-based WellSky utilizes software and analytics to help providers across the continuum achieve better outcomes at lower costs.

Dolisy noted that companies like Google, that are already pouring billions of dollars into AI R&D, are important allies to have.

"For us, it's super important to be able to rely on that because I don't want to reinvent the wheel at that level," he said. "We have to partner with people that have those technologies and are aligned around the philosophy of how to go to market with those technologies. I think that's what makes [us] a great fit with Google."

Through the partnership, AI tools embedded into WellSky solutions will allow home health providers to automate essential tasks.

One example of this is automating portions of the Outcome and Assessment Information Set (OASIS) assessment. Incorporating these AI tools will allow clinicians to have more time with patients which could lead to better overall outcomes.

"The encounters take 90 minutes," Dolisy said. "If you think about the overhead that the clinician has to take on to actually key-in and finish the encounter itself, you're probably looking at another 30 minutes after that.

If you reclaim 5-10 minutes for every start of care that's going on, that's days of productivity you're getting back. That productivity means spending more time with the patient, or seeing more patients."

Home health providers have called out scheduling and documentation as two main areas where AI could help over the last several months.

"We're finding ways to integrate AI into our clinical documentation processes to reduce the variability of the documentation quality and reduce the time burden on clinicians," Intrepid USA CEO John Kunysz recently told HHCN.

VNS Health CEO Dan Savitt also said that AI was “quickly evolving” in home health care.

On its end, WellSky spent the past summer identifying the best AI use cases for providers.

In addition to streamlining OASIS assessments, the AI tools will also give providers quick access to relevant historical patient information, trends and anomalies to improve the care delivery process.

These tools will be especially useful for things like generating concise and accurate discharge summaries.

“We’ve realized also that those discharge summaries — their length, their accuracy, their conciseness — is a key element of providers being able to discharge a patient to another care setting,” Dolisy said. “We believe that there’s a ton of opportunity at that level for us to be able to help make it easier on the clinicians, but also get better outcomes for the providers.”

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