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Netsmart Works Collaboratively with Epic on Interoperability for Behavioral Healthcare and Clinical Acute Care Environments

Initiative will help bridge care gap for patients with co-occurring physical and behavioral illnesses

Overland Park, Kan., January 14, 2014 – People with serious mental illness treated in the public mental health system in the U.S. die on average 25 years earlier than those without a mental illness, according to a study by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. These early deaths are attributable not directly to mental illness, but more often to untreated co-occurring physical health issues such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease.

To address this serious widespread issue, [Netsmart](#) is collaborating with Epic to accelerate clinical information interoperability between physical and behavioral health providers and improve coordination across all modalities of care for people with mental illness.

“Now is the time to break down the traditional silos that separate the diagnosis and treatment of behavioral and physical health and start treating the ‘whole person,’ said Michael Valentine, chief executive officer, Netsmart. “We’re pleased to work with Epic to mitigate the intolerably high human and economic costs of co-morbidity.”

The collaboration aims to use existing national interoperability standards, such as the Continuity of Care Document (CCD), including summary behavioral health data, and the IHE XDR integration profile to demonstrate a working model for exchanging information for behavioral health use cases, with patient consent. The exchange will both protect patient privacy and provide clinicians with appropriate access to critically-needed information. In addition, enabling connectivity between Epic and Netsmart users will allow clinical data sharing for behavioral health use cases between healthcare providers that serve more than half the U.S. population.

“Standards-based interoperability between systems is important for our customers and for our industry,” said Peter DeVault of Epic. “We were able to quickly and efficiently implement this connection because both companies supported the national interoperability standards. It’s a good demonstration of how the standards support a broad spectrum of clinical use cases, including mental and behavioral health.”

When analyzed on a population basis, mental health and addiction disorders impact the cost of care for those afflicted with co-morbidities. Studies show that the top 20 percent of consumers with a physical health diagnosis who are co-morbid with a mental illness account for more than 80% of Medicaid costs. One goal of the collaboration is to reduce cost of care by providing clinicians ready access to data that enables them to identify and treat co-morbidities at an earlier stage.

The initial implementations will occur with several pilot participants in different areas of the U.S. Two early participants are Memorial Healthcare System, the second largest public healthcare system in the nation, and Henderson Behavioral Health, south Florida's oldest and largest behavioral health system. The initial focus on clinical interoperability between the two organizations involves bi-directional communication to facilitate efficient transition of care for referrals and discharges. This interoperability will result in improved care coordination for consumers/patients and significant time savings for staff.

"Integrating physical health services with behavioral health services is critical to improving overall health outcomes," said Steve Ronik, Ph.D., CEO, Henderson Behavioral Health. "At Henderson Behavioral Health, we understand how important this is and feel a tremendous obligation to make this happen and to ensure our technology is there to support this initiative."

"Memorial Healthcare System has been dedicated for years to using technology in a manner that helps advance communication and healthcare information for the benefit of patient care," said Forest Blanton, senior vice president and chief information officer for Memorial Healthcare System. "This implementation will further enhance communication between providers, helping to make progress in the overall delivery of care."

Another participating behavioral health provider organization is Gracepoint Management, Inc., which includes three leading behavioral health providers in Florida: Mental Health Care Inc., Personal Enrichment Through Mental Health Services Inc. and Agency for Community Treatment Services Inc.

"This groundbreaking initiative directly affirms that Gracepoint is the source for wellness by engaging key providers in coordinated care through information exchange," said Joseph F. Rutherford, CEO of Gracepoint Management and Mental Health Care. "We're excited to be involved in this project that can directly improve care for people who have some of the most complex health issues complicated by fragile mental health states. Our target is a treatment plan that includes measurable behavioral and medical goals."

About Netsmart

Netsmart is committed to helping health and human services providers deliver effective, recovery-based care with Netsmart [CareFabric™](#), a tightly woven framework of innovative clinical and business solutions and services that supports integrated, coordinated delivery of health services across the spectrum of care.

More than 22,000 client organizations, including 450,000 care providers and more than 40 state systems use Netsmart products to help improve the quality of life for tens of millions of people each year. Netsmart clients include mental health and substance use treatment agencies, psychiatric hospitals, private and group mental health practices, public health departments, social services and child and family health agencies, vital records offices, and managed care organizations.

Netsmart is pleased to support the EveryDay Matters Foundation, which was established for behavioral and public health organizations to learn from each other and share their causes and stories. Organizations can also request grants for their cause or to help fund technology that advances the way care is delivered. For more information, visit www.everydaymatters.com/foundation.

Learn more about how Netsmart and CareFabric are changing the face of healthcare today. Visit www.ntst.com, call 1-800-472-5509, follow us on [Twitter](#), like us on [Facebook](#) or visit us on [YouTube](#).

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