

Partnering with Sound Physicians

MEDICAL DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT



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Dr. Brar is board-certified in internal medicine. He currently serves as medical director for La Fuente Post Acute in Vista, California, and practices hospital medicine at Tri-City Medical Center in San Diego County. His interests include palliative care, hospice, and golf (when he can find the time).

What attracted you to this line of work?

My background is hospital medicine, where I work seven days on, seven days off. The nursing home practice started as a way to help a couple of my colleagues, filling in during my off weeks, and I enjoyed it. The work is similar to a hospitalist's role, but you get to interact more with families, and there is a slightly different dynamic. In the hospital, you will typically use consultants for nephrology, cardiology, urology, neurology. The majority of your patients are getting consults. In the nursing home, you are managing the whole picture. I like the challenge and the responsibility.

Why did you partner with Sound Physicians for after-hours Support?

Last year, the medical director at a nursing home I was supporting got very sick with COVID-19 and ended up in the ICU. I was approached to take over and was happy to step up, but my concern was who can support me at night? I knew I couldn't be up working overnight during the weeks when I was already working day shifts at the hospital. So, my one caveat to taking on the role was for the facility to find me a trusted partner for physician coverage at night.

I had previous experience with Sound Physicians' hospitalist programs and was familiar with their work in transitional care, managing costs over the entire episode, and reducing readmissions. When I found out about their cross-coverage model for skilled nursing facilities, I knew it would be a win for all parties involved. We were able to get the program in place, and it has made all the difference.

Let's talk about partnering on nights, weekends & holidays.

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What have been the outcomes of working with Sound?

The nightshift nurses have gone from having five different providers with different numbers to call, including one who never answered their calls, to one solution that covers all residents. We had a few hiccups in the beginning because of COVID, but once we got through that, it's been great. Regarding COVID, we had a serious outbreak last fall, and I was very, very thankful that we had Sound Physicians to help support us with that. They've been able to help a lot of our residents, and it's been a lot easier on me to have this additional support for patient monitoring. I just feel safer having the tele-hospitalists on shift at night because I know the residents have a good doctor looking over them.

When you talk to other medical directors about remote physician coverage, what concerns do you hear?

I've heard a couple of concerns. One is, "Oh, my liability's going to increase because someone who doesn't know what they are doing is going to take care of my patients." When I hear this, I assume it's someone who doesn't know about Sound's performance management system or the kinds of doctors they hire. I think because I already had previous experiences with Sound Physicians, I just knew from the beginning that the tele-hospitalists would provide excellent care.

The other big concern I've heard is, "How will I know what is happening with my patients at night?" I think this is something everyone worries about. When it's your patient, you want to stay 100% informed. We all want that. At my facility, communication has been working well. When the tele-hospitalists see a resident, they document everything in the EMR. We have a system in place where our nightshift nurses communicate with me about all residents that have been seen and any issues or concerns that I need to be made aware of. For me, communication is the key, and Sound is prioritizing this, which is important.

How are things going now at your facility?

It's been very rewarding. Like a lot of nursing homes, the way of doing things hadn't changed in a while. Fortunately, everyone has been very open to new thoughts and ideas, including adding Sound Physicians' support at night. I've brought some things over that I was doing at the hospital, like rolling out a sepsis protocol, and the Sound Physicians team is collaborating with us on that.

I'm hoping we can roll it out to other facilities. COVID-19 was a catalyst that forced us to do things differently, but we've come out stronger because of it. You know, I'm a big fan of Sound Physicians. It's been a collaborative effort.