

CASE STUDY

Successfully Implementing a Telemedicine Program to Improve Night Shift Care

Kern River Transitional Care, a 114-bed Skilled Nursing Facility located in Bakersfield, CA, takes pride in delivering high quality short-term and long-term care to their residents. Registered nurses (RNs), licensed vocational nurses (LVNs), and certified nurse assistants (CNAs) are available 24 hours a day.



Night Shift Challenges

Kern River Transitional Care needed to improve coverage and care for their residents during nighttime hours. According to Joan Samia, Director of Nursing, "We have wonderful doctors here, but it takes time for them to answer us during the night shift. When we looked at where we could improve our program, everything pointed to issues that were happening overnight."

A Sound Solution

After exploring several options, Kern River partnered with Sound Physicians for dedicated tele-hospitalist support during nights, weekends, and holidays. The program launched in early September 2020. Within the first two months, the facility connected nearly 100 times with Sound for patient care.

Courtney Galindo, Assistant Director of Nursing, believes the service has been good for everyone, including residents. "We didn't know how our residents would feel about seeing a physician who wasn't their primary provider, but I've only heard good things. Residents enjoy having the Sound doctors available after hours for any issues that come up."

Positive Outcomes

The night shift nurses quickly developed good relationships with Sound Physicians tele-hospitalists. According to Galindo, "They feel comfortable calling them whenever they need support, without feeling like a burden." This has resulted in an increase in residents treated in place at night, with fewer hospital readmissions.

Results From First 60-Days

- **91 connects with Sound tele-hospitalists**
- **96% treatment in place**

Five Keys to Telemedicine Program Success

Samia and Galindo cite five key factors that led to the program's immediate success:

-  **Choosing The Right Telemedicine Solution**

Not all Telemedicine solutions are the same. For Kern River, technology alone couldn't solve their clinical problem. By partnering with Sound Telemedicine, the facility gained engaged physician coverage overnight, which helped them address their biggest concerns.

"Our nurses really feel supported now. When they need extra eyes on a resident, orders, or just another clinical perspective from the doctor, the Sound Telemedicine physicians are there for us. And the doctors are very patient and kind, which has made our nurses feel as if they can use the service even more."
-  **Aligning Everyone to the Same Goals**

The leadership team at Kern River understood that success would only happen if everyone aligned around the same goals. They clearly communicated the reasons for the program and educated the team on the benefits.

"We agreed that our first goal would be reducing the number of transfers happening at night. We would use the service when residents experienced any changes in condition - that was our first priority. Alignment helped us develop specific protocols for when our nurses would connect with the tele-hospitalists."
-  **Educating the Entire Nursing Staff**

Sound Telemedicine provided comprehensive training before the launch, so everyone felt comfortable using the iPads to connect. With easy-to-use technology and a dedicated "go-live" team, Sound ensured a smooth transition to the new program, setting the facility up for success.

"It took a little time to get used to the settings and flipping the camera forward and rear. But after everyone got it, the training was seamless - they helped us all the way!"
-  **Partnering with the Medical Director**

Kern River included their medical director, Dr. Ferrer, in discussions with Sound prior to signing the contract. This ensured his buy-in and support for the nursing staff's new nighttime protocols.

"Dr. Ferrer has been very receptive to the program and I think it's been a big weight off his shoulders knowing that the residents are being looked after when he is not readily available."
-  **Making Data-Driven Decisions to Expand the Program**

During the first month of the program, a dedicated account manager held weekly check-ins with the facility to review data, including the number of consults, reasons for each connect, and missed opportunities. Today, the ongoing data and analysis provided by Sound Telemedicine are helping to inform future utilization.

"The staff is now comfortable using the service for any changes in condition. We are also using the service for reviewing labs. Based on the data we're seeing and the positive feedback from our staff, the next step will be expanding the program to integrate it with our admissions process as well."

Let's talk! We can help you improve care and reach your financial goals.