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Telemedicine and APRNs at Plaza Health Network at the Forefront of Advanced Skilled Nursing Care Services

 When it comes to filling the need for higher acuity care, skilled nursing centers are being asked to step in. The ever-increasing cost of health care has resulted in health care professionals and patients turning to skilled nursing facilities to provide the specialized, sub-acute care needed after discharge from a hospital, prior to returning home.

Many facilities are not properly equipped to treat patients in

this critical state. However, Plaza Health Network, South Florida's largest skilled nursing network, has made a commitment to provide the state-of-the-art technology and advanced nursing staff required to ensure the highest quality care for transitioning, frail patients.

"As our centers are called upon to care for higher-acuity patients and drive better clinical outcomes to avoid re-hospitalization, Plaza Health Network is implementing systems that go above and beyond what other skilled nursing centers provide," said Elaine Bloom, president and CEO of Plaza Health Network.

These 24/7/365 systems include a sophisticated telemedicine/telemetry program and advanced care provided by APRNs (Advanced Practice Registered Nurses) who are the most highly trained of all nursing professionals.

APRNs perform many functions previously reserved for doctors, such as diagnosing conditions, ordering and interpreting lab tests, and prescribing medications. Additionally, the skillset of the Plaza Health Network APRNs allows them to oversee specialized services such as in-house and bedside dialysis, as well as programs for patients with cognitive disorders, respiratory issues, and other serious co-morbidities.

"One of the ways we are elevating the quality of nursing care is by having our APRNs coordinate patient care and services with our nursing directors and staff. The support they provide helps to successfully care for patients who need sub-specialized care, including those who have just undergone transplants," said Claudia Innocent, RN, MSN and Plaza Health Network's chief clinical officer. "It's what gives us the edge above some other nursing facilities and allows us to form strategic partnerships with acute health care facilities."

Plaza Health Network is also using telemedicine to bring critical health care services to patients while reducing emergency transports and hospital re-admission. The HIPAA-compliant technology provides real time, remote monitoring by physicians of all vital signs for patients at all six

facilities within Plaza Health Network.

Cardiologists, neurologists, and pulmonary medicine specialists serving Plaza Health centers can access a video conferencing feature, enabling them to communicate with any of the centers' nursing professionals to provide immediate care resulting in a clear decline of hospital re-admission rates.

"Quick action makes a huge difference in cases of patients who are compromised. By implementing telemedicine and telemetry services, our patients receive life-saving measures when they need it most," stated Bloom. "Above all, patients are protected from physiological and psychological stress associated with hospital readmissions and transfers by allowing us to perform the assessment and delivery of more services inside our facilities.

In fact, recent studies have shown that off-hours telemedicine services often help avert many hospital admissions or readmissions, reduce Medicare costs, and improve clinical outcomes for patients.

Plaza Health views telemetry and telemedicine as necessary components in today's care model to reduce unnecessary and costly hospital transports. It's why the Plaza Health Network Foundation has selected this venture to raise funds for the development of innovative, patient-focused programs that go above and beyond the basics covered by insurers. By investing in technology to improve the quality of life of patients, the Plaza Health Network Foundation helps ensure that all Plaza Health Network centers stay at the forefront of care.

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Phone : [561-368-6950](tel:561-368-6950)

Fax : [561-368-6978](tel:561-368-6978)

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