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HIGH-TECH SYSTEM MAKES 'HOUSE CALLS' FOR PATIENTS WITH SLEEP DISORDERS

Goal to Increase Compliance While Controlling Costs

NORWOOD, MASS. (Issued April 2008) -You could call it a 'high-tech house call.'

A critical but difficult goal for home health care companies is ensuring that people are correctly using their equipment. For those with sleep disorders, compliance can mean the difference between improved health and a better quality of life -- and unscheduled trips to the doctor or emergency room.

Now, Reliable Respiratory, a home respiratory equipment product and service provider based in Norwood, Mass., and serving all of New England, is staying in touch with patients with a cutting-edge patient management system that not only improves compliance, but also increases communication -- while reducing costs. Using the medSage system, an automated (human voice) call regularly surveys patients, whose spoken or keypad replies are recorded on a chart that is reviewed by Reliable's staff. Live follow-up calls are made as needed.

According to Reliable Respiratory Chief Operating Officer Robert McTighe, the medSage system improves the level of patient care on several levels: "The system gives us a timely snapshot of how the patient is doing and if our equipment is doing its job. It helps us stay up-to-date on changes in a patient's condition, insurance and physicians. The call can serve as a reminder about replacement supplies and/or equipment upgrades."

Calls are made according to a schedule geared to each patient's equipment, medical condition and their availability. Patients respond with spoken 'yes' or 'no' answers or may use their keypad to answer a series of questions.

To help with Quality Improvement, the data collected measures overall customer satisfaction and shows where refinements are needed. "The system reduces staff calling and data collection time - yet keeps us in touch with customers," says McTighe. "Identifying insurance or physician changes before prescriptions are filled helps our record-keeping, decreases the insurance denial rate, identifies patients who no longer need our equipment, and reduces emergency orders." McTighe says the system is "another step toward our mission to become integrally connected to the community and to our collaborative partners who are all working toward the same goal."

Reliable Respiratory provides home CPAP/bilevel units for patients suffering from sleep-disordered breathing, compliance programs and recurring supplies for patients with sleep disordered breathing, nebulizers for those requiring medication dispensed as a liquid mist, and oxygen cylinders and concentrators for people with lung disease. The company works with physicians' offices, hospitals and sleep labs throughout New England and is an in-network provider with most major insurance companies.

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- By Stanley Hurwitz