2023
HOSPITAL PREDICTIONS

We don't need to venture too far to understand that COVID-19 (and the fallout of COVID-19) will continue to have a major impact on hospitals in 2023, including staffing and budgets. ESO's health industry experts have put together this list of predictions and trends we see having the biggest impact on hospitals this year.

Accompanying each prediction are recommended actions you can take to help ensure success in 2023.

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Hospital systems will continue to feel the impact of global economic pressures.

Current economic concerns and pressures conspire to have an impact across hospitals and hospital systems. The cost of providing services will continue to increase due to inflation and supply chain issues. Hospitals won't be immune to workforce reductions across multiple industries, which will put pressure on hospitals as leadership will challenge teams to do more with less. Additionally, reshaping cost structure to ensure sustainability will be key, especially with more Medicare patients coming into hospital systems. Thoughtful budgeting for 2023, long-term strategic planning, and digital investments will be essential to help hospitals navigate the broad uncertainty they face.

TAKE ACTION

✓ **Support nursing and allied health partners.** To fill the staffing shortage, consider the provision of enhanced clinical training and real-life exposure to allied health and nursing partners. When you open your facility to students and trainees, they are better prepared (and familiar with your organization) to step into essential roles. Additionally, consider sharing training rooms and simulation equipment with allied health partners.

✓ **Partner with EMS and professional organizations.** The connection and shared responsibility between EMS and hospital systems is growing more and more every day as EMS serves as a primary referral engine for hospitals.

✓ **Revisit value-based care models.** Employee assistance programs (EAPs) and Peer Support Teams are terrific ways to provide support to your staff. EAP can provide support for marriage, finances, mental health, substance abuse, and many other issues. Peer Support Teams are a group of trustworthy peers that provide a confidential and safe place with excellent listening skills. Oftentimes these teams serve as a first line of defense in provider wellness. Encourage your organization to use these resources.

✓ **Monitor the impact of staffing on bed availability, emergency department throughput, and ambulance off-load delays.** While there is an appropriate emphasis on novel care models that do not require inpatient care, the current lack of necessary inpatient capacity is creating significant issues with respect to the patient journey – whether it begins as a scheduled procedure or through the emergency department. Dynamic staffing models with surge capacity are a best practice to avoid impactful delays.

Technology will play an even greater role as we evolve in the digital era.

While we've seen technology continue to play an increased role in hospital systems and healthcare generally, leveraging digital (and virtual) systems will be even more important in 2023 as hospitals will be affected by global economic uncertainty and behavior changes driven by the COVID pandemic the last few years. Telemedicine is here to stay, and competitors will emerge to challenge the status quo and meet patients where they want to be met. Access to smart, wearable technology (think smart watches and fitness trackers) will continue to evolve. For example, Zoom and Amazon are starting healthcare divisions that will provide access to information and medical resources in a new way. New roles are emerging based on the technological shifts in care delivery. Additionally, training and certification will become increasingly virtual and digital in 2023. Hospitals will need to understand and reconcile with the evolving digital era to succeed in 2023 and beyond.

TAKE ACTION

✓ **Create policies for patient requests for data.** While most hospitals have policies and procedures in place to address and respond to traditional patient data requests, the emergence of new technologies and new obligations to provide access to patient data will drive the need for updates and modifications to these policies and workflows. For example, data from a wearable device that has been subsumed into the broader hospital system will likely drive additional questions from patients and clinicians that can access only bits and pieces of data that weren't accessible before. It will be essential for organizations to create frameworks to solve these emerging challenges and to help drive consistency while saving both time and resources.

✓ **Optimize your training programs.** Enable your teams with virtual and digital training programs for continuing education. Organizations that don't focus on this area will quickly fall behind the technology curve for learning.

Rural geographies are at risk.

Macroeconomic conditions and the emergence of digital/virtual options for healthcare will continue to place a disproportionate share of the impact on rural geographies. CMS is proposing to incentivize certain small, rural facilities to cease inpatient services other than the emergency department. Additionally, according to the General Accounting Office (GAO), more than 100 rural hospitals closed between 2012–2020. This trend will continue in 2023, potentially extending transport time for patients in rural areas from ~5 minutes to more than 40 minutes in some cases. We will also see instances of greater technology and infrastructure investments in rural areas (such as faster Internet, better cell reception, more state legislative efforts, etc.) to serve this increasingly isolated population. Hospital consolidation will continue, and rural and critical access hospitals will figure largely in these new combinations.

TAKE ACTION

- **Evaluate your rural strategy.** Determine where and how investments (people, technology, physical locations, etc.) and key partnerships with organizations like EMS agencies, home care providers, virtual systems of care and community resources will allow you to best serve rural populations.

- **Use local communication channels and social media.** To reach your surrounding communities, use your social media channels and build relationships with local news outlets.

- **Embrace telehealth.** Luckily, technological advancements provide a great opportunity for rural area providers to meet with patients virtually. Patients are now proactive shoppers with access to care and providers at their fingertips. Options now feel limitless, so providers – especially time-sensitive emergency care such as Trauma, Stroke, and Cardiac care – should embrace and build a strategy to support telehealth and consult solutions. Organizations that can securely share data with patients and with other healthcare organizations may be a key factor in adding value to patients beyond providing care.
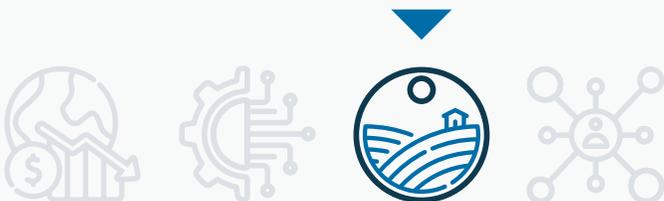
Data interoperability continues to be essential.

With hospital closures, hospitals merging and being acquired, and new devices (smart watches, smart phones, etc.) providing additional input around a patient's healthcare journey, systems that can talk to each other and share data will be absolutely essential. Additional requirements and consumer demand for hospitals to make patient data available to patients contemporaneously will continue to drive the need for interoperability. The ability to quickly and seamlessly integrate across systems and access key data elements will separate hospitals from those that fail to those that succeed.

TAKE ACTION

- ⊘ **Don't forget about data processes and security.** As technology – like remote patient monitoring and telehealth – changes where and how patients receive care, it is important to ensure the data collected from these devices can be shared securely. Carefully consider how new connected technology will integrate into your organization's existing systems, and make sure you have a top-of-the-line security system to protect your precious data from cyber attacks.

- ⊘ **Explore patient matching technology.** Patient matching technology uses demographic information to match patient records from multiple health systems. The technology efficiently connects patient information so providers can access a more complete view of the patient's care journey.

- ⊘ **Collaborating with others in the healthcare continuum.** Lean on your relationships with other areas of the patient journey to develop patient-centered metrics. This way, you and your partners can practice "best practice" benchmarking instead of lateral benchmarking.

ABOUT US

ESO (ESO Solutions, Inc.) is dedicated to improving community health and safety through the power of data. Since its founding in 2004, the company continues to pioneer innovative, user-friendly software to meet the changing needs of today's EMS agencies, fire departments, hospitals, and state EMS offices. ESO currently serves thousands of customers throughout North America with a broad software portfolio, including the industry-leading ESO Electronic Health Record (EHR), the next generation ePCR; ESO Health Data Exchange (HDE), the first-of-its-kind healthcare interoperability platform; ESO Fire RMS, the modern fire Record Management System; ESO Patient Registry (trauma, burn and stroke registry software); and ESO State Repository. ESO is headquartered in Austin, Texas. For more information, visit www.eso.com.

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