5 Challenges for Children's Hospitals in the COVID-19 Era

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted acute care hospitals across the world. And while many have noted that the virus has not had the same impact on children as it has on adults, it has affected some pediatric populations, and it has certainly impacted the good work that is being done at children's hospitals.

In this white paper, we will examine 5 challenges that children's hospitals face in the COVID-19 era, and examine how these hospitals can use analytics to help them address these challenges.

1. Consolidation in pediatric care

While children's hospitals are not experiencing the same influx of COVID-19 patients that adult acute care hospitals are experiencing, they are suffering from ripple effects.

Acute care hospitals need to make additional beds available to COVID-19 patients. Typically, about 50% of hospitalized children are cared for in 2,000 adult facilities across the country. As a result, the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) released guidance to support making extra beds available, recommending the consolidation of pediatric care. That means moving children, and in some cases, young adults, from acute care facilities into children's hospitals, if possible.

How analytics can help

Analytics can help children's hospitals with capacity planning and determining what space they have available to patients and what space they might be able to convert into additional beds. It also enables them to see up-to-date census data and understand where in the hospitals patients and staff are located.

2. Deferring elective procedures

Like acute care hospitals, children's hospitals have had to defer many elective procedures during the COVID-19 crisis to ensure the safety of patients, families, physicians, and other hospital staff. This also helps them manage the capacity surge as acute care hospitals fill with COVID-19 patients.

Deferring these procedures has resulted in significant revenue losses for children's hospitals, and these hospitals will have to apply for public health emergency funding as provided in the CARES Act that was passed by Congress.

How analytics can help

Analytics can provide assistance to hospitals by tracking finances and missed revenue opportunities, and enabling users to quickly visualize that information and drill down into the details if they need to.

In addition, as children's hospitals apply for funding provided by the CARES Act, analytics will enable them to organize their information and have it readily available to ensure as smooth of a reimbursement process as possible.

3. Increased patient protocols

During the COVID-19 threat, it's more important than ever for children's hospitals to understand who is coming into the facility and what their health status is. With the care of medically fragile children needing to continue, it's imperative that these children and their healthcare providers do not get sick.

Many hospitals have changed their patient and visitor protocols since early 2020 due to the COVID-19 threat. For example, Boston Children's Hospital screens all staff, patients, and family members upon arrival at the hospital and has limited the number of patient visitors to two caregivers.

These increased protocols cost children's hospitals time and, as a result, money.

How analytics can help

Analytics solutions can help children's hospitals organize their policies and resources so data on patients and caregivers is easily accessible to staff.

In addition, hospitals can integrate staffing data into their analytics solutions so they can understand productivity, absent or sick staff, and where their staff is located within the hospital.
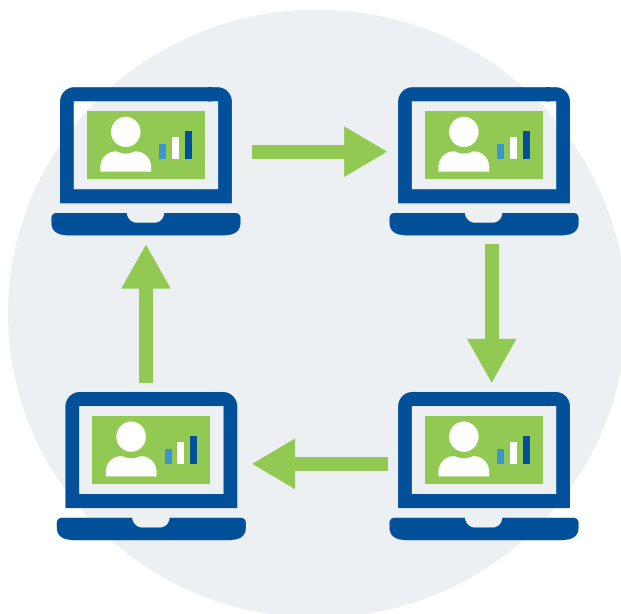
4. Routine care

Of course, children do still get sick, or require emergency care, or are due for well visits. While many well visits can be deferred, some—particularly for children under age 2—need to continue, especially to keep up with vaccination schedules.

Some children's hospitals are consolidating routine care by temporarily closing satellite facilities and moving care to fewer locations. Many patient visits are also being moved to telemedicine when possible. For example, some sick visits can be conducted over telemedicine since the provider can visually see patients to see their demeanor and listen to their coughs. Many well-visits are also being moved online, with the option to come back in person for height, weight, and vaccinations once the COVID-19 threat has diminished.

How analytics can help

Analytics can help children's hospitals manage routine care in several ways. First, capacity management tools can help hospitals understand the impact of closing satellite locations and consolidating care.

Second, analytics can help manage vaccination schedules and push out alerts to providers when children are due for their shots.

Third, analytics aids in the delivery of telemedicine by helping providers better understand key data points so they can deliver better, faster, and more meaningful service to patients. Some of the data that can be examined includes:

- ❒ Overall volume
- ❒ Peak usage times
- ❒ Average call length and wait times
- ❒ Diagnoses/reasons for visit
- ❒ Revenue volumes and ratios
- ❒ Prescription rates
- ❒ Outcomes

5. Containment and Placement

While most pediatric patients who contract COVID-19 experience mild symptoms of the virus, hospitalization does still occur in this age group. Statistics from the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) show that 5.7% of known pediatric cases of COVID-19 require hospitalization.

It is known that patients who have underlying conditions suffer worse outcomes than those without these conditions, so COVID-19 is particularly worrisome for medically fragile children.

In addition, teen vaping has grown at an alarming rate over the last several years, with more than 37% of 12th graders reporting they had vaped over the previous year. Studies have shown that vaping compromises lung function, and there are many concerns over COVID-19 outcomes among smokers and vapers.

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How analytics can help

Analytics allows children's hospitals to flag patients who have underlying conditions and segment them out during analyses so they can track and compare outcomes.

In addition, tracking can be useful in smoking and vaping cessation efforts by allowing providers to monitor the outcomes of their efforts and proactively reach out to patients to provide them with the support they need, such as through telehealth sessions.

About Diver Platform

Dimensional Insight's Diver Platform is a data management, analytics, and performance management platform that is trusted by its healthcare customers, including leading children's hospitals.

Diver Platform provides hospitals and health systems with access to the trusted data they need to make more informed decisions that move the needle on patient care and outcomes.

Applications built on Diver Platform contain measures (or KPIs) that healthcare organizations can quickly deploy, resulting is fast time to insight and ROI.

To learn more about Dimensional Insight's Diver Platform and associated applications, please visit: https://www.healthcare.dimins.com.

About Dimensional Insight

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