

Neighborhood Health Leverages Mobile to Reinvent Street Medicine

THE CHALLENGE

Break down clinic walls to increase access to care

With an estimated 2,000 people experiencing homelessness in the greater Nashville area, Neighborhood Health ramped up efforts to take their comprehensive care services to the streets.

“We broke down the walls of our clinic and started the mission to provide street medicine to the people unable to obtain access to medical services here in Nashville,” said Peter Cathcart, MD, formerly at Neighborhood Health.

Four street medicine teams were formed—each consists of MDs, behavioral health providers, family nurse practitioners, RNs, patient navigators, and van drivers. The teams look for encampments within the Nashville area as they trek along with backpacks ready to help individuals in need.

THE SOLUTION

Maintain the same level of practice efficiency

To deliver care outside the confines of their clinics and maintain billing and workflow efficiency, Neighborhood Health relies on NextGen Mobile Plus.

“The solution revolutionized how we can deliver care,” said Dr. Cathcart. “With NextGen Remote Scribe Services, I can dictate my notes on the fly, so I don’t have to go home and sit down in front of a computer and restart my day.”

When engaging with patients at an encampment or on the streets, the team can check their blood pressure, get labs, and even dispense medications. With an iPad, they use NextGen Patient Self-Scheduling on the patient’s behalf to get them into the system. As the visit proceeds, providers can review a patient’s chart from their smartphone with NextGen Mobile.

An EKO stethoscope with Bluetooth technology enables providers to listen to vital signs even with traffic in the background. A Butterfly ultrasound helps assess prenatal care needs, cardiac abnormalities, abdominal issues, and joint complaints. A mobile ECG device can check for heart disease. These tools allow the clinic to treat and care for people unable to access community health centers for routine checkups. Without these medical outreaches, a homeless person’s only encounter with a provider might be in an emergency room.

Top prescribed medications and diagnoses

The team often treats patients with antibiotics, anti-hypertensives such as Lisinopril, Albuterol, Permethrin for scabies, Spiriva for COPD, Ibuprofen, Mupirocin, and Atorvastatin. Top diagnoses include cellulitis, musculoskeletal pain, and hypertension. Trench foot, frostbite, heat exhaustion, heatstroke, and other environmental-related health conditions are also treated.

CLIENT PROFILE

Neighborhood Health

Background: Neighborhood Health is a network of 11 centers that serves more than 31,000 people and manages more than 90,000 visits each year. Medical services include pediatrics, family practice, prenatal care, women’s health, opioid treatment, diabetes and hypertension, sexual health, dental care, and behavioral health.

NextGen Healthcare Solutions:
NextGen® Enterprise EHR
NextGen® Enterprise PM
NextGen® Mobile Plus
NextGen® Remote Scribe Services
NextGen® Patient Self-Scheduling

HIGHLIGHTS



Organized street medicine teams to deliver care to the homeless



Conducted approximately 700 patient street encounters in a year



Maximized capabilities of NextGen Mobile to streamline workflows and save time



Leveraged NextGen Patient Self-Scheduling to get patients into the system

“You meet new faces all the time out there, but you definitely develop a trust with certain individuals, particularly those that we’ve been seeing for a year now,” said Dr. Cathcart.

Build trust one encounter at a time

The street medicine team conducted approximately 700 unique patient encounters in one year. Some of these encampment and street medicine patients come to a Neighborhood Health clinic to follow up for labs or screenings. Their visits affirm that when they receive quality care in the field, they will trust the providers and come back for routine visits.

Billing and tracking processes for street medicine

Patients are added to the schedule through NextGen Patient Self-Scheduling, and the front desk checks them in, similar to a regular in-office visit. The charge links back up to that encounter during the auto-flow process. A team member enters this data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

“These charges are often applied toward grants that fund medical care for the homeless. We keep track of how many people we see, how many encounters we have for a particular patient, and the types of care provided,” said Andrea Ricke Arnold, RN, former director of clinical informatics, at Neighborhood Health. “The information goes into a report for our governing bodies.”

Staff members use the practice management check-in autoflow process to run the real-time services (RTS) and see if patients have insurance. They’ll run it for Medicaid QMB and Medicare-type payers to determine what the patient is eligible for, such as a third-party payer. If they are uninsured, they can run the charges through homeless grants that fund the street medicine program.



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Workflow of a patient encounter on the street

The workflow begins when the street medicine team approaches a patient and asks their name. The HMIS and consent forms are filled out with the assistance of a patient navigator. The provider conducts the visit in a HIPAA-compliant manner away from other encampment members. If the examination requires more privacy, the team uses the facility of a partner organization.

The provider pulls up their health record in NextGen Mobile and sees if the patient has been seen by the team before. “It’s easier to document in real time, instead of waiting for staff to get back after an hour to populate your patient panel,” said Dr. Cathcart.

Providers use NextGen Mobile to review the patient’s past encounters with the street medicine team or one of the Neighborhood Health clinic locations. They can determine if the patient has seen another provider for a specific health concern related to women’s health, behavioral health, or oral health. The patient’s past medical history is on screen before the interview. The workflow is dependent on the reason for the primary encounter.

“If a patient has mild, intermittent asthma without any exacerbation and has lost their Albuterol, we can open our mobile dispensary and provide them with an inhaler. The medications tool in NextGen Mobile Plus is handy during this particular encounter,” said Dr. Cathcart.

“I can send the medication directly to our in-clinic dispensary and see if the patient has other long-standing medications that may need to be refilled. This saves them a trip across town. When our visit is done, we send them on their way and, hopefully, see them back in a couple of months, and they’re doing well.”

One of the main benefits of NextGen Mobile for Dr. Cathcart is dictation. He said, “I go through the entire note template. I ask the scribe to generate my patient plan and then ask them, depending on whether they’re a new patient or an established patient, to populate the coding structure. The scribe generates my master documents and lets me know that my chart is ready for review. I can also capture images in the field, whether it’s a rash, a screenshot from my Butterfly ultrasound, or an EKG.”

One of the benefits for the community is how easily healthcare professionals can leverage technology to serve the homeless population effectively. Neighborhood Health’s street medicine teams can see them—it doesn’t matter if they’re a mile off the trail or right on the side of the road.

“We have met many wonderful people, said Dr. Cathcart. “You care about them as your patients, and they give you so much back. It’s just fun to hear their stories and learn from them.”

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