

# Charting the future of hospice and home care: Industry experts talk strategies for success

Over the past year, home care and hospice agencies have faced unimaginable challenges. While the future may seem hazy due to the hurdles of the present, we asked industry experts to share what they believe will be the biggest trends and changes in the coming months.

Resoundingly, these experts voiced optimism about the future of both the home care and hospice communities, underlining the leading role technology will play in the months and years to come.

In this paper, learn how your organization can ready for tomorrow's success today.

## Featured experts:

- Edo Banach, president and chief executive officer of National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, on the virtual care balancing act
- John Blaschke, chief information officer of Care Synergy, on interoperability
- Bill Dombi, president of National Association for Home Care and Hospice, on the short and long-term impacts of COVID-19
- Ernesto Lopez, chief executive officer of Hospice of Washington County, on the future of virtual care

As home care and hospice providers stride forward, these takeaways on technology, virtual care and lasting impact from COVID-19 can inform strategy and infrastructure, allowing agencies to meet tomorrow's challenges armed with the lessons learned from today.



**Edo Banach**  
*President and CEO*  
National Hospice and  
Palliative Care Organization

## Balancing virtual and in-person visits

The best example of technology in hospice is using telehealth to do the face-to-face interview. We have obviously seen an increase in the use of telehealth for interviews. A word of caution, though: we want to make sure that we learn from this pandemic and accelerate some of that move to telehealth.

At the same time, we still have a very lonely country and, in some places, a very isolated country. People need a human touch, so we have to make sure that we use technology appropriately, not use it to replace the human touch.

That's the sweet spot of hospice and palliative care organizations. When a person actually needs a human touch, we provide that touch. And when they can make do with a virtual visit, we can do that.



**John Blaschke**  
*CIO*  
Care Synergy

## Interoperability and the future of hospice

While interoperability has long been an industry buzzword, now is the time for the hospice community to embrace the concept completely. We're still a paper-based, fax-based, hand-written industry. What we are seeing as we have been forced to be remote is how inefficient the system is.

Whether organizations use electronic health information exchange (HIE), point-to-point interfaces, Direct Secure Messaging or Carequality platforms, the ability to share patient information across organizations both internally and externally will not only make organizations more efficient but will also better care.



**Bill Dombi**  
*President*  
National Association for  
Home Care & Hospice

## COVID-19 impacts today and tomorrow

As we plan for care in a post-COVID-19 world, providers must recall their adaptability and ingenuity. While it may seem impossible to see beyond the encompassing shadow of COVID-19, remember that there are brighter days ahead, that there is a tomorrow worth planning for today.

### Short-term impact of COVID-19:

- Regulatory and payer flexibilities
- Financial stability risks
- Workforce safety/risk
- New competitors outside of home care industry

### Long-term impact of COVID-19:

- Improved home care value perception
- Embrace of technology advancements
- Better pandemic planning



**Ernesto Lopez**  
*CEO*  
Hospice of  
Washington County

## The permanence of virtual care

Telehealth is here to stay. The rapid acceleration of communication technology has been a good beneficiary of the pandemic. We have all been forced to embrace telehealth and I foresee these tools being an integral part of the care delivery process that will help us further anchor our presence and connection with our patients and their families.

We must figure out a more effective way of not only supporting our patients in the nursing homes, but also leveraging technology to help our partners who are going through a devastating set of circumstances with their residents.

We also have to continue to think outside the hospice box in how we have traditionally engaged with our patients and families. As a traditional touch and feel industry, we need to embrace new methods of communication and help bridge legacy process and procedure in order to rise above our current level of expectation.

### About Netsmart

Netsmart designs, builds and delivers electronic health records (EHRs), solutions and services that are powerful, intuitive and easy-to-use. Our platform provides accurate, up-to-date information that is easily accessible to care team members in behavioral health, home care, senior living and social services. We make the complex simple and personalized so our clients can concentrate on what they do best: provide services and treatment that support whole-person care.

By leveraging the powerful Netsmart network, care providers can seamlessly and securely integrate information across communities, collaborate on the most effective treatments and improve outcomes for those in their care. Our streamlined systems and personalized workflows put relevant information at the fingertips of users when and where they need it.