

G A L V E S T O N C O U N T Y

# PROFESSIONALS

## Sigma pairs remote monitoring with home visits to create perfect service combination

Sigma Health Care has created a new service to provide more effective and efficient care for Galveston county, home health patients. In addition to the in-home visits to patients by clinicians, the new system provides three major functions: a thorough daily health assessment specific to the patient's illness such as diabetes, high blood pressure or heart failure, daily reminders for the patient's health care activities such as medication reminders and medication refills, and monitoring of patient blood glucose and other vital signs such as blood pressure, temperature and weight via special devices given to patients.

The success with this new system is due to its straight-forward process and the patient's high level of comfort with an electronic device that they already know how to operate: the home telephone. Patients normally do not need training to use this new system.

The purpose of Sigma's remote monitoring program is to improve the quality of life for individuals with chronic illnesses by minimizing any decline in the patient health status that could lead to hospitalization and ER visits. Patient information is collected and any unusual value is alerted to a health care professional instantly. As a result, proper and immediate action takes place. Reduction in hospital and ER visits is accomplished by utilizing integrated telecommunication technology with timely and appropriate clinical intervention.

Since its inception in 1997, it has always been the philosophy of the founders of Sigma Health Care to provide a better care by utilizing innovative technology that is more familiar to patients at a lesser cost. This has always been practiced with the main purpose of increasing the quality of care for chronically ill patients in the convenience of their homes. This philosophy allows the company to be a pioneer in the high tech home health care and disease management, and the technology behind them.

"Our promise at Sigma is to provide patients with the quality care they deserve in the comfort of their homes. This new service further advances that promise" said Amer Taha, Executive Director and founder of Sigma Health Care. "With Sigma's new HomeCare remote monitoring program, patients are evaluated daily by a virtual clinician without leaving their homes. The clinical evaluation process takes only two to three minutes each day, yet it reduces the chance of hospitalization or ER visits for many of our patients" Taha added.

### Complete Clinical Assessment

With HomeCare Interactive Telephony™, a patient can participate daily in a complete clinical assessment scheduled to be received over the phone. These assessments consist of specific in-depth question and answer interactive protocols designed for a patient's particular illness; the questions asked are similar to

those questions asked by a clinician. Every question is asked based on the answer made by the patient to the previous question. Decisions are then made to accommodate the patient's health status.

This service is distinguished from all other traditional home health services because it is available to patients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. "We don't stop checking blood sugar or blood pressure for patients after 5 pm because we need to close our doors," said Taha. "Our work continues and all abnormal values that are received are alerted to a clinician via text messages and e-mail anywhere and anytime of the day which allows us to direct the patient properly."

A few of the conditions that Sigma Health Care works with in this program are as follows: congestive heart failure, diabetes, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, medication compliance, dementia, and recently a new project is being tested for patients with blood thinner Coumadin®; these patients need to frequently monitor the level of the medication in their blood.

### Medication and activity reminders

The system provides automated reminder calls that are specifically geared to each patient's medication schedule. A call is made to the patient at each scheduled medication intake time, whether it is four times a day or just once a day. If a patient is not answering, the call can be repeated at different times or can be rout-

ed to other caregivers including remote family members. If no call is received by anyone, an alert is made to a clinician via text message and e-mail for further action.

The medication reminder also ensures that the patient has enough medication for the next five days. This same reminder call will connect patients directly to their prospective pharmacies for medication refills. Patients do not even have to know their pharmacy number or pharmacy name as their medication is directly connected from their electronic medical record. Along with these medication reminders, patients can also receive reminders to take their vital signs.

### Home devices for telemonitoring

A Sigma Health Care professional can leave a blood pressure device, a weight scale or a blood sugar monitor at a patient's house for their personal use. These wireless devices are connected to the patient's electronic medical record at the agency to receive readings each time that the patient uses the home device. Alerts, which are made to clinicians 24 hours a day, 7 days a week are initiated when out-of-range readings are received.

.....  
 This process allows real time patient information for faster intervention and most likely prevention of an adverse event that requires hospitalization or an ER visit.  
 .....



### No training or system set up

There is no special hardware or software set up needed at the patient's home.

All patient information is directly driven from the electronic medical record of the patient. A history of all activities is available to the agency staff, physicians, and patients on-demand in a secure and easy manner.

For the last decade, Sigma has provided in-home health care nursing visits and physical, occupational, and speech therapy for seniors of Galveston county. This new service now allows Sigma

to be a national health care provider for disease managements for chronically ill patients.

This system is now available for both Medicare and private pay patients.

The cost for private pay is very small compared to what is available out there today.

However, there is no extra cost if the patient is a home health patient at Sigma.

Call Sigma at 800-246-6614 to learn more about this system and how it can be of help to you or your loved ones.