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New Senior Living Pilot Puts Telehealth to the Test

June 19, 2015 by [Cassandra Dove](#) [Comments \(0\)](#)

Telehealth holds promise as a way for seniors to receive medical evaluations and interventions from the comfort of their own home — including in senior living communities — through technologies such as video and wearable sensors.

Providers see telemedicine as a way to potentially avoid hospital admissions and improve residents' well-being. But with the technology still in its early stages, some operators wonder: Is it all it's cracked up to be?

Senior living operator Front Porch is embarking on a pilot with Intel-GE Care Innovations to find out.

Intel-GE Care Innovations, a joint venture between Intel Corporation and GE Healthcare, is partnering with Front Porch's Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing (FPCTIW) to measure the benefits of remote patient monitoring (RPM) with 10 senior living residents at two Front Porch senior housing communities in California. Glendale, Calif.-based Front Porch collaborates with companies that work with staff and residents through the FPCTIW to identify, test and deploy technology solutions that help residents.

Participating residents will also have access to a video chat platform that enables a caregiver and the resident to virtually connect with one another to discuss conditions and assess a resident's environment.

Front Porch is a not-for-profit support system, including Front Porch Communities and Services, that comprises 10 full-service retirement communities in California and two adult living communities: one in Louisiana and one in Florida. Funding was provided by Front Porch's Humanly Possible innovation initiative.

Research on the benefits of telehealth in senior living is slim, experts say. Providers looking to the academic literature to find support for launching telehealth initiatives may be disappointed to find few gold-standard studies on the benefits of technological interventions for either patients or caregivers, said Paul Freddolino, Ph.D., at the American Society on Aging annual conference held in Chicago last March.

Freddolino, of Michigan State University's School of Social Work, has [undertaken](#) a small study on the use of a telemonitoring solution. And although it too is small in scope, the findings from the Front Porch initiative

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“We’ll be collecting data based on observations from pre-/post-surveys, interviews, and focus groups, and use this information to determine the solution’s efficacy and business viability to scale across other Front Porch communities,” says Davis Park, director at FPCTIW.

FPCTIW [explores innovative uses of technology](#) to “empower people as they age,” Park says.

“With this pilot with Care Innovations we’re looking at how we can use this solution to provide higher levels of care without more involved caregiving interventions, such as a nurse visiting the residence,” he says.

A New Health Care Paradigm

RPM is a home health care strategy that allows a resident or patient to take blood pressure, weight, oxygen, glucose and other vitals readings with little or no help from a caregiver or nurse, and transmit these data to the provider who can proactively and appropriately respond to alerts before an emergency arises.

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Residents of Kingsley Manor in Los Angeles and Claremont Manor in Claremont will use Health Harmony, Care Innovations’ RPM platform.

FPCTIW will begin recruiting for the first five participants at Kingsley Manor within the next month, and the project will “go live” in mid- to late-July with the intervention for six months, followed by five additional residents at the Claremont Manor community around October for six months, Park says.

Using Health Harmony, participating residents will conduct daily health sessions to capture vital signs and other information needed for caregivers to manage care plans, promote medication adherence, and remain on top of patients’ changing health.

Initially, Health Harmony will only be available to Front Porch residents who require a higher level of care and monitoring due to poor chronic condition management or following a return to a senior living community after a discharge from a skilled nursing facility.

If the pilot test proves successful, FPCTIW will outline a plan for developing a resident needs assessment with best use case scenarios, a business model, and an adoption and training program that have been based on the original testing phase, and “take this program to scale at other Front Porch communities in partnership with Care Innovations,” Park says.

It behooves senior living and other health care providers to explore ways to reduce health care costs, he says.

“As the Affordable Care Act rolls out it’s creating a different paradigm of health care that is about quality of care and prevention,” he says. “This [pilot] fits squarely in that perspective.”

Care Innovations is dedicated to finding ways to manage risk, improve care and reduce costs, according to the company’s website.

“As the aging population continues to grow, it’s important that senior living

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communities are part of efforts to help people live healthier lives at a more sustainable cost," says Sean Slovenski, CEO of Care Innovations, in a statement.

Front Porch staff at the two participating communities will undergo training to learn how to appropriately respond to RPM data, Park says, adding that success of the program will rely heavily on community engagement.

"We're making sure everyone is on the same page," he says. "It's not so much about the tech as it is the care model and workflow. Understanding the protocols and procedures when it comes to responding to elevated vitals is going to be a very new and different approach for staff."

Written by [Cassandra Dowell](#)

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