



# synzi

How Virtual Care Supports the Shift to  
Value-based Care

# How Reimbursement is Shifting

The outlook for home health agencies is becoming increasingly complex with the advent of the Patient-Driven Groupings Model (PDGM) in 2020. PDGM reflects how the US healthcare system continues to shift its reimbursement model from volume-based (fee for service) to value-based (fee for outcome); this evolution will further complicate how and when agencies are reimbursed for care.

One can imagine a future that requires agencies to embark on risk-sharing contracts where the agencies are reimbursed only if the patient achieves certain clinical milestones. In such a scenario, patient engagement and improvements would be measured at specified intervals (such as 10-day, 20-day, 30-day, etc.) and after being discharged from therapy. Reimbursement would be tied to patient “performance” during and after the episode of care. The compensation structure could change; home health staff would be compensated for the results of their care vs. their visits conducted.

*“Our customers are committed to delivering high quality and cost-effective home healthcare. We see ourselves as a disrupter in the ever-evolving post-acute care market. Unlike our competition, we focus on the last 5 feet in healthcare – essentially, reaching the patient where s/he wants to age and heal at home – while providing the analytics which helps our customers make better decisions on how to best engage patients throughout the episode of care,” said Lee Horner, CEO of Synzi.*



A unified payment may also be on the near-term horizon for home health agencies. The BETTER Act was introduced in the U.S. House of Representative in June 2019 and calls for MedPAC to submit a “prototype value-based payment program under a unified prospective payment system for post-acute care services” by March 15, 2021. Today, home health agencies (and other PACs – post acute care organizations) receive separate, setting-specific Medicare reimbursement.

In the future, a unified model would reimburse all PAC providers under one overarching framework. Under a unified model for PAC reimbursement, home health providers could receive a projected payment cut of about 5%. However, home health agencies with successful partnerships with institutions and community referral sources (along with health plans) could be well-positioned under a unified payment system if they are able to show how they are achieving results (better outcomes) for their partners. Technology-savvy providers will also have an edge, according to Joanne Cunningham, executive director of the Partnership for Quality Home Healthcare (PQHH), a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization. “Technology is going to be key – understanding your data and organization,” Cunningham said at the October 2019 HHCN Summit. “The partnership is putting a lot of effort right now in a big data project that’s looking at the clinical outcomes of patients in different settings with the same diagnosis.”

With the shifting landscape in reimbursement, home health agencies will need to future-proof their care delivery in order to be able to leverage value-based reimbursement based on patient satisfaction and outcomes. Virtual care – specifically a communication platform – can help agencies enhance the impact of their care by helping them better engage patients throughout the episode of care.

# Value vs. Volume of Care with PDGM

PDGM is the most significant change to the home health payment reform in the past 20 years. With roots from the previously proposed Home Health Groupings Model (HHGM), PDGM introduces new payment episode timings and removes therapy visits to determine payment, continuing CMS' goal of better serving all individuals via value versus volume of care.

Among its provisions, PDGM is designed to remove incentives to over-provide therapy services by more strongly weighting clinical characteristics and other patient information, according to CMS. The model also halves the 60-day unit of payment to 30 days, doubling billing requirements for providers. As the CMS Rule's label describes, all clinical processes (and related operational sub-processes) will require improvement initiatives that focus on achieving CMS's Triple Aim Goals – achieving patient satisfaction, quality patient outcomes and cost-effective healthcare delivery.

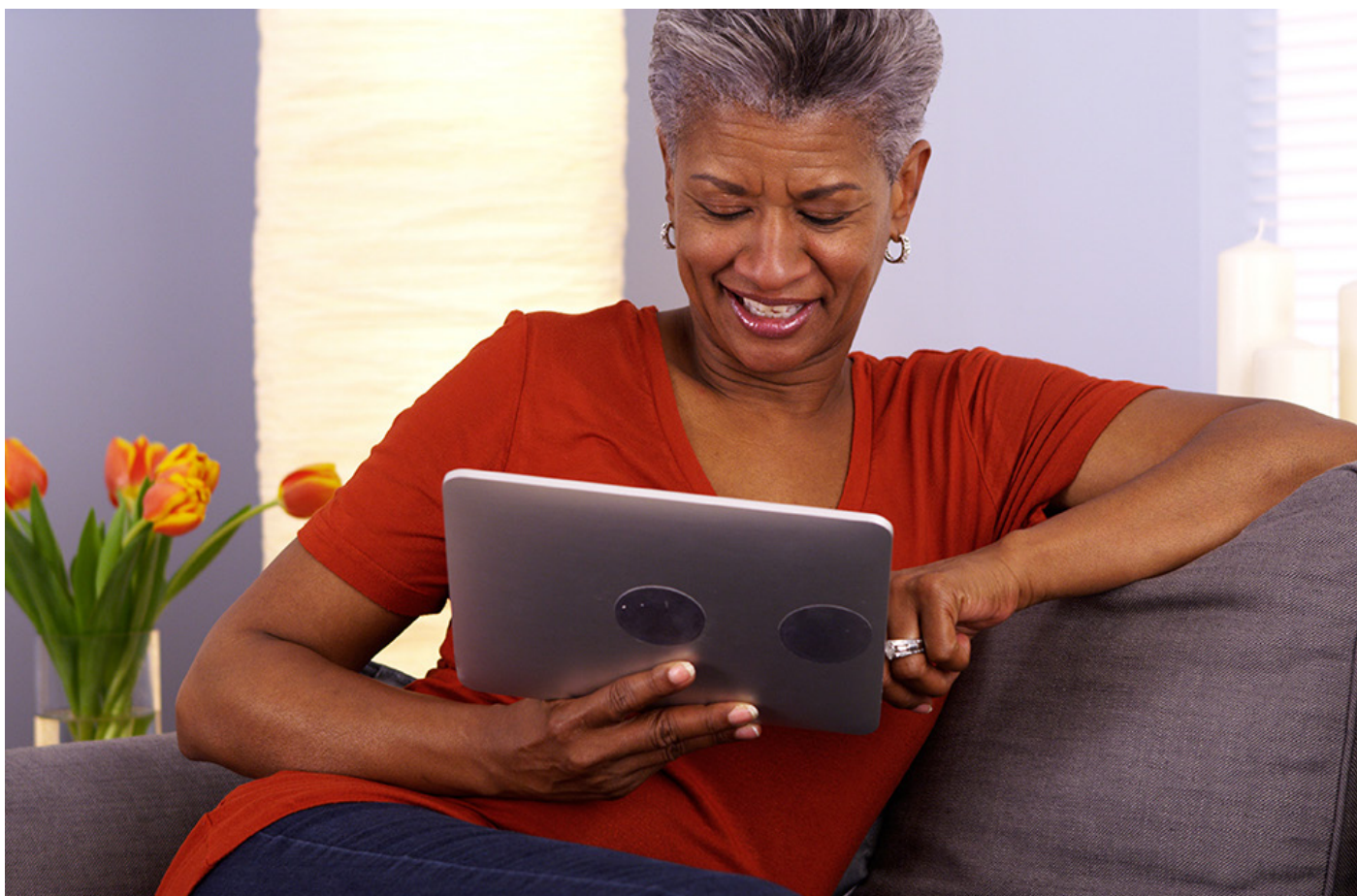
Most notably, PDGM changes the methodology for calculating payments. These changes in computing Medicare payment rates can impact a home health provider's PDGM reimbursement levels when compared to historical PPS payment levels. One of the key concerns is how PDGM 2020 shifts home health reimbursement toward patient characteristics, thus eliminating therapy-visit volume as a determining factor in calculating reimbursements. As a result, therapy will no longer be a guaranteed revenue-driver.



# Engaged Patients Reduce Readmissions and Boost Your Bottom Line

Given the reimbursement landscape, agencies are increasingly concerned with delivering care that is patient-centric yet cost-contained. With the emergence of fee-for-value and capitated models, agencies are using Synzi's virtual care communication platform to provide better care at better margins, leading to better outcomes for patients and increased referrals.





Synzi's virtual care communication platform is designed to help an agency survive and thrive under PDGM. With Synzi, a home health agency's staff will have more consistent contact with patients, leading to better adherence, reduced ER visits and readmissions, and enhanced patient satisfaction. Given the increased attention to achieving and maintaining 5-star ratings, home health agencies recognize that patient improvement and satisfaction are critical components of being able to prove value. High-quality care and frequent touchpoints are essential to these ratings.

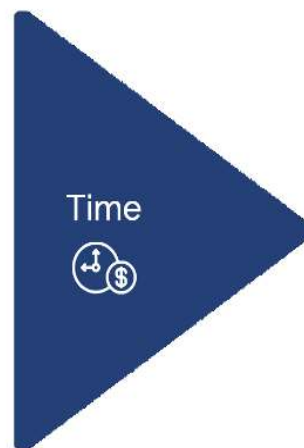
Synzi can help optimize the experience for the patient and the home health agency as all stakeholders can stay in better and more frequent communication during the episode of care. Administrators use the Synzi platform to send out timely messages suited to the patient's condition and care. Ongoing communications include appointment reminders, medication adherence reminders, and diet/exercise recommendations. Patients can also safely use the Synzi app – and its HIPAA-compliant secure message, email, and text functionality – to reach their home health clinicians regarding questions or issues.

The average distance a home health clinician drives to and from a patient's home is 50 miles (25 miles each way.)



With Synzi, your staff can conduct many of the patient visits virtually and not need to drive to/from patients' homes for every appointments. The distance for each virtual visit is 0 miles.

The average duration of an in-person/at-home visits is 2 hours – including travel time and the actual appointment.



With Synzi, the duration of a virtual visit is the actual length of your clinician-patient interaction – for example, 20 minutes.

In this scenario, your home health clinicians can provide in-person/at-home care for 6 patients in 1 day, factoring in travel time, additional responsibilities, and breaks.



With Synzi, your staff productivity is optimized and your clinicians can see as many as 18 patients in one day – virtually!

By enabling staff members and specialists to conduct 3 video-based check-ins with patients in the time it takes to drive to/from and conduct 1 at-home visit, Synzi helps agencies provide high-quality care that is patient-centric and cost-contained. The essence of the in-person clinician-patient relationship remains intact during the video-based virtual check-in's. The patient's family members can also be included in the virtual visits to drive better understanding of the patient's progress and next steps. Savings in just travel expenses could be \$200,000 for a 20-nurse staff.

New payment models will create incentives for home health agencies to increase their efficiency, communication, and quality of care. Data on patient engagement and patient satisfaction will be critical to agencies seeking higher payment rates. Synzi also enables agencies to provide a more holistic view of the patient by sharing patients' levels of engagement with various touchpoints throughout the episode of care. With Synzi's platform, the administrator can also assess each patient's level of interaction with each communication and the cadence of touchpoints. As needed, the administrator has the flexibility to adjust the messaging to better engage (or re-engage) the patient. If there are concerns about non-compliance, the home health agency can decide if a more immediate intervention (e.g., call, in-home visit, or transfer to the ED is necessary.

Using a combination of messaging and video touchpoints, Synzi's virtual care platform can help a home health agency increase satisfaction and outcomes for the patient while actively reducing the number, length, and related costs/penalties of hospital stays. The coordinated plan to engage patients throughout the episode of care helps agencies minimize any "what if" scenario for the future of their agency, their reputation, their staff, and most importantly, the agency's impact in their region and community.

50 miles x \$0.55/mile x 1 patient x 20 nurses =  
\$550/day or \$200,750/year

# Support Therapy Services

Instead of cutting back on therapy services, an agency can become more cost-effective when delivering therapy services in the home setting by using telehealth / virtual care. By using Synzi to facilitate virtual visits, agencies can eliminate the need for certain in-person therapy visits without negatively impacting patient care.

NAHC recently surveyed home health providers plan to understand their anticipated changes in therapy strategy for 2020. Findings highlighted that respondents are expecting to change their therapy utilization and staffing strategies:

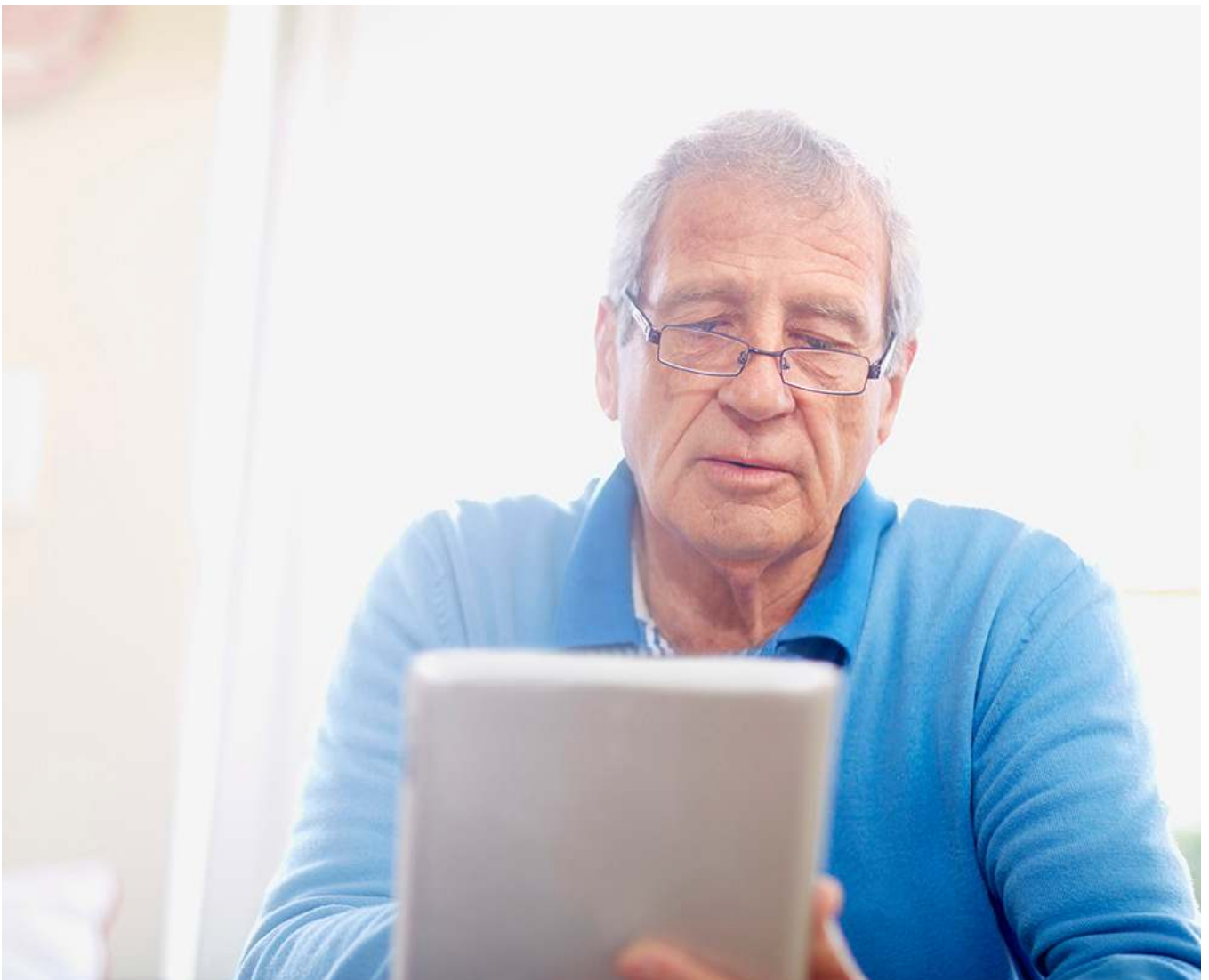
- About one-third of surveyed providers expect to maintain current levels of utilization in 2020
- 23% said they expect to decrease utilization by less than 10%
- 25% plan to reduce utilization by more than 10%
- About 16% were unsure as to how PDGM will affect their therapy operations.
- Only 2% said they plan on increasing therapy utilization in response to the payment overhaul.
- 50% of providers do not anticipate making staff changes in therapy
- 28% anticipate decreasing staff

More than 25% of NAHC's surveyed home health providers said they are actively exploring telehealth technology specific to therapy. Over 5% of providers anticipated an increased use of therapy telehealth tools in 2020. Home health agencies are starting to recognize the value of virtual care / telehealth in terms of supporting their therapy strategies.



# Increase Ratings

CMS designed the HHCAHPS Survey star ratings on Home Health Compare to provide patients and family with data which can help inform health care decisions and to inspire home health agencies to improve quality of care and the patient experience. Communication is a critical component of the HHCAHPS assessments. In the survey, patients are asked about the communication they had with their home health care providers, if the providers had set expectations accordingly, and if the providers had asked about the patient's medications. The assessment also includes asking patients about how their providers listened to them, if the patient was treated with respect, and how providers managed patient pain.





Synzi's HIPAA-compliant platforms helps a home health agency better engage patients between home visits, resulting in better outcomes and better star ratings.

- Using video-based virtual visits, an agency's clinician can introduce himself/herself to the patient before the initial at-home visit and highlight the expectations for the episode of care. This interaction will help patients and their family caregivers understand the next steps in the transition of care from inpatient to outpatient and also have an improved perception of the care which the agency is delivering.
- Throughout the episode of care, an agency administrator can program a series of automatic messages which remind the patient about medication adherence, diet and lifestyle recommendations, and upcoming video-based or in-person visits. The ongoing stream of messaging enables the agency to show concern for the patient's well-being throughout the episode of care and not just during virtual or in-person visits.

The interactive aspect of Synzi's platform provides the patient with multiple opportunities to raise any potential concerns with the care prior to the patient completing the HHCAHPS surveys. Synzi enables ongoing communications which help agencies achieve better outcomes for their patients and higher survey scores.

# Increase Referrals

Hospitals are under the microscope for lowering the overall cost of care – including the related lengths of stay and readmission rates – while strengthening patient engagement. Outcomes-based reimbursement depends on proper reporting from all partners in the healthcare ecosystem. To minimize penalties and maximize performance, hospitals (along with other institutional and community referral sources) are seeking out home health agencies which efficiently and effectively “bring the hospital to the home.” Agencies which can show higher patient satisfaction scores, lower readmission rates, and more quality rankings are invaluable to these referral sources. As a result, many home health agencies are implementing Synzi to help them engage these patients – leading to improved outcomes and increased referrals from these sources.

These competitive-minded agencies are also increasingly aware that they will receive a higher reimbursement rate for institutional referral sources versus community sources under PDGM. As 2020 is approaching, astute agencies are aligning their goals – better care, better outcomes, better margins – with like-minded hospital and SNF partners. Smart agencies are proving how they can deliver the best care – meaning, care that is timely, responsive, and appropriate for each patient and their respective family/home situation – in the post-acute stage with Synzi



*"With Synzi, our customers are positioning themselves as pioneers in delivering patient-centric care in competitive markets and have been able to increase referrals by forty percent as a result," said Lee Horner, CEO of Synzi.*

Synzi's HIPAA-compliant virtual care platform allows staff to continually communicate with patients via video, email, text, and secure messaging in order to check on patient progress and reinforce the treatment plan without compromising the patient experience.

- With Synzi, an agency's administrator can schedule a cadence of communications designed to deepen patient understanding and engagement about one's role in self-care. The messaging can also reflect the referring partners' protocol for the specific patient and treatment pathway.
- Referral sources also value the Synzi platform's ability to help a home health agency better engage patients who are part of the Limited English Proficient Population in the United States. With Synzi, these home health agencies are uniquely able to bring an interpreter into a video call with their patients and also translate ongoing messaging into a patient's primary or preferred language.
- Data on how the patients are responding to requests for video calls, emails, secure messages, and text also help these smart agencies provide a continuous and more realistic perspective of their patients before, during and after each interaction.

As the healthcare ecosystem continues to embrace fee-for-value, the Synzi platform positions an agency for success based on its ability to improve overall outcomes while lowering care costs for all stakeholders. Using Synzi's platform, home health agencies are experiencing a 40% increase in referrals. With Synzi, home health agencies can be more competitive, and most importantly, more successful in delivering on the referral partners' goals of providing patient-centric yet cost-contained care.

# Optimize Staff Productivity / Address Staff Shortages

In this era of “doing more with less,” many home health agencies are currently dealing with a staffing shortage and also anticipating a greater health workforce shortage in coming years. Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel to work in the homes of patients is a top concern of agency owners and executives. Employee churn – which can lead to cancelled/rescheduled appointments and undermine an agency’s ability to take on new patients – can lead to a breakdown in the continuum of care, weaker overall outcomes, and an increased risk of readmissions. Ultimately, this can adversely impact an agency’s reputation amongst community and institutional referral sources.

Synzi’s platform can innovate the way an agency’s clinicians can operate, thus attracting interest from clinicians at competing agencies or those at a crossroads in their nursing careers. By enabling nurses to use Synzi’s HIPAA-compliant video to augment or replace some of the in-person visits, an agency can relieve some of the driving stress experienced by visiting clinicians. Using Synzi’s award-winning technology also helps an agency position itself as innovative and future-focused – which can attract high-performing clinicians who are seeking a better opportunity to deliver cutting-edge care to more patients.

Given the immediacy and impact of virtual care, agencies can use the platform to achieve greater staff satisfaction, retention, and engagement – thus, helping a home healthcare organization achieve the Quadruple Aim in healthcare.

In the shift towards value-based care, home health agency executives are also discussing an extra initiative — staff satisfaction — which evolves the Triple Aim into a Quadruple Aim. With Synzi's dynamic platform, staff will appreciate the flexibility in being able to provide care from any location throughout the day, night, and geography they serve. Clinicians will also have greater access to an agency's educational sessions from anywhere, at any time, by using the video functionality for on-the-job training and coaching. By helping clinicians use a real-time communication platform to connect with patients and colleagues, an agency can quickly become the employer of choice in a highly competitive area. Given the immediacy and impact of virtual care, agencies can use the platform to achieve greater staff satisfaction, retention, and engagement – thus, helping a home healthcare organization achieve the Quadruple Aim in healthcare.



# Get Started with Synzi

Reimbursement pressures under PDGM will force agencies to optimize their availability resources in order to maintain and increase their bottom line. Smaller and underperforming agencies are at risk for closing operations or being subject to unwanted consolidation or acquisitions by larger agencies. A future reimbursement program based on risk-sharing will change the operational structure of a home health agency. Home health agencies are now financially incentivized to be a more proactive partner in caring for their patients and communicating outcomes to their referral sources. Your agency's success is interwoven with the success of your patients, their families, and your referral sources.

Synzi will help your agency maintain the continuity of care from the hospital or physician's office to the patient's home or next point of care. Touchpoints can be customized to your referral partners' protocols, your patient's condition, and the patient's preferences for and modality.

With Synzi, your agency elevates the clinician-patient relationship by using HIPAA-compliant messaging, video, email and text to enhance care for patients with complex chronic needs and/or at-risk for readmission.

*"As the healthcare ecosystem faces increased pressure to lower the cost of care and improve outcomes, the Synzi platform gives home health agencies the ability to strengthen patient engagement and optimize staff productivity while helping reduce unnecessary and costly readmissions," said Lee Horner, CEO of Synzi.*



