



Want Help Managing Telephone Calls to Your Office?

Handling periods of high telephone call volumes is a management challenge for most doctors' offices. Here's an interesting fact that can help offices manage those calls better. A study published in the *Journal of Family Practice* found that 23% of after-hours calls to the doctor's office were made by 0.6% of that office's patient panel.¹ Identifying patients who call more than once over the same or similar issue and connecting them with enhanced care options can have two important benefits. One, it can improve the overall care of these patients and enhance the patient experience with the practice. Two, it can reduce call volume by an appreciable margin while not reducing the patient panel.

In a later study, Hildebrandt and colleagues pulled the charts of high frequency callers and found their common characteristics.² Compared to the control group, frequent callers proved 120 times more likely to use the emergency department during the year (1.2 times per year on average) and 80 times more likely to be admitted to the hospital (2.4 times per year on average). Given the correlation between frequent calling and possible hospital readmissions, enhanced interventions have the potential to **reduce hospital readmissions** among high utilizers and improve patient health and peace of mind.

Other common characteristics of frequent callers include multiple diagnoses and multiple medications. Twenty-three percent had pain, and 17% had chronic medical conditions.



23% of after-hours calls to a family practice are made by 0.6% of the patients. Use BVNAH to give these patients enhanced medical support.

When your patients are homebound (i.e., leaving the home is a considerable and taxing effort, they require assistance, and trips from the home are infrequent), Baystate Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice (BVNAH) stands out as an **excellent management option to reduce frequent phone calls and reduce unnecessary rehospitalizations**. When you refer your patients to BVNAH, those patients have a nurse on-call 24/7. Day or night, patients call our nurse on call first to discuss their current health concerns. Furthermore, upon your referral, we will begin follow-up teaching for your patient and your patient's caregivers. Making multiple visits to your patients' homes, we will reinforce teaching on medication, diet, signs and symptoms of exacerbation, emergency planning, and other topics related to your patient's diagnoses and prescriptions. For qualified patients, Medicare pays 100% of allowable costs from BVNAH, and Medicare pays doctors for overseeing home-care services provided by BVNAH.

BVNAH Leads the Way in Avoiding Unnecessary Rehospitalizations



BVNAH staff leads the Pioneer Valley with the lowest re-hospitalization rates for their patients. Recognizing the increasing trend of patients with chronic conditions, BVNAH began expanding their focus beyond the current episodic care reimbursement to include management of chronic illness. In addition to providing the specific home skilled need, BVNAH began focusing on patient self management, helping the patients and families learn to manage their chronic illnesses in a way that improves their overall health and quality of life. Focusing on heart failure, and then expanding to chronic care management has helped BVNAH improve their hospitalization rate to 23% while the state rate is at 28%. BVNAH's services can be a vital element in helping your patients to improve their function and their quality of life.

*Consider Baystate Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice for your patients.
To make a referral call: 800-249-8298.*

References

1. Hildebrandt D, Westfall J. Reasons for after-hours calls. *J Fam Pract.* 2002; 51: 567-569.
2. Hildebrandt D, Westfall J, Nicholas R, et al. Are frequent callers to family physicians high utilizers? *Annals of Family Medicine.* 2004 November / December; 2 (6): 546-548.