

## Addressing Patient Leakage and Enhancing Retention through Virtual Hallway Phone Consults.

### Introduction

The U.S. healthcare system is grappling with an increasingly prominent issue: patient leakage. This term refers to the loss of patients to out-of-network healthcare providers, a trend that not only disrupts the continuity of care but also significantly impacts healthcare organizations' bottom line. Patient leakage is estimated to cause the average hospital between \$200 and \$500 million in losses annually. While 94% of health systems identify reducing patient leakage as a priority, 60% do not have a definite plan to reduce patient leakage<sup>1</sup>. It is essential to explore novel, technologically advanced solutions to tackle this concern. A potential tool to combat patient leakage lies in the use of Virtual Hallway phone consults, an interprofessional consultation platform designed to enhance communication, optimize resources, and improve patient retention.

### Problem Statement: Patient Leakage and its Consequences

Patient leakage occurs when patients, intentionally or unintentionally, seek care outside of their healthcare provider's network. This can result from several factors, including lack of specialist availability, unclear referral pathways, or inadequate communication between primary care providers (PCPs) and specialists, or between specialists themselves.

### These instances of patient leakage pose significant concerns

**Financial Implications:** Patient leakage directly impacts the financial health of healthcare organizations. With 43% losing over 10% of their potential revenue and 19% forfeiting more than 20%<sup>2</sup>, patient leakage also leads to reduced patient loyalty and retention, exacerbating these financial losses.

**Quality and Continuity of Care:** Patient leakage disrupts the continuity of care, making it challenging to maintain comprehensive health records, deliver coordinated care, and preventing effective implementation of value-based care. It can lead to redundant or unnecessary treatments, which in turn negatively affect the quality of care.

**Inequity in Healthcare Access:** Patient leakage can exacerbate health inequities, particularly in rural or underserved populations, where access to specialist care is already limited. By forcing patients to seek care outside their local network, leakage can widen the existing disparity in healthcare access.

### Solution: Addressing Patient Leakage

To address patient leakage, healthcare organizations must prioritize enhancing patient retention, optimizing referral processes, and improving communication between PCPs and specialists. A strategic approach involves adopting innovative technology platforms such as Virtual Hallway, a phone-based consultation system that facilitates direct, efficient communication between PCPs and specialists.

## Virtual Hallway

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Virtual Hallway is an intuitive digital platform enabling phone consultations between primary care providers and specialists, effectively bridging geographical disparities in healthcare. Its seamless integration into existing workflows, coupled with its ability to streamline scheduling between providers, ensures timely care and reduced patient transfers. With built-in features for efficient call documentation and alignment with existing billing codes, it streamlines physician compensation. In doing so, Virtual Hallway not only enhances patient care standards but also optimizes operational efficiency within the healthcare system.

### The Role of Virtual Hallway in Mitigating Patient Leakage and Improving Retention

Virtual Hallway phone consults provide several key benefits that can help healthcare organizations address patient leakage and improve retention.



#### Enhanced Communication:

Virtual Hallway facilitates direct, immediate communication between PCPs and specialists, enabling prompt discussion and decision-making regarding patient care. In many cases, PCPs do not know the specialists within a network sphere, which can lead to out of network referrals<sup>3</sup>. A centralized network like Virtual Hallway can lead to more efficient referrals, reducing the likelihood of patients seeking care outside the network due to delayed or denied referrals.



#### Improved Continuity of Care

The use of Virtual Hallway ensures that all patient-related communication is centralized and accessible to all involved providers, enhancing continuity of care. This is particularly important in managing complex cases that require input from various specialists, as it ensures that care is coordinated and patient needs are met promptly.



#### Efficient Resource Utilization:

Virtual Hallway phone consults can help health organizations optimize their resource use. By enabling PCPs to discuss patient cases with specialists, they can manage a greater proportion of low-acuity cases, freeing specialist time for high-acuity patients. This approach not only expedites patient care but also boosts specialist visit revenues.



#### Patient Retention:

By improving the efficiency of the referral process and the quality of care, Virtual Hallway can significantly reduce specialist wait times, enhance patient satisfaction and loyalty, thereby reducing patient leakage. It gives patients the confidence that their care is being managed promptly and effectively within their network, reducing the likelihood of seeking care elsewhere.

## Empirical Evidence Supporting Virtual Hallway's Impact

Virtual Hallway's service has been quantitatively evaluated through a survey administered to 608 Primary Care Providers (PCPs) who used the system for consultations. The data collected provides evidence of Virtual Hallway's potential role in mitigating patient leakage.

84%

### Avoided Referrals

The study found that 84% of consultations via Virtual Hallway resulted in avoiding a formal referral to a specialist. This significantly reduces the likelihood of patients being sent outside of their healthcare network, contributing to the reduction of patient leakage.

98%

### Enhanced PCP Capacity and Confidence

The study also highlighted Virtual Hallway's impact on the capacity and confidence of PCPs in managing patient care within their community. An overwhelming 98% of surveyed PCPs agreed or strongly agreed that Virtual Hallway enhanced their ability to handle care plans, lessening the necessity for external specialist intervention.

99%

### Improved Patient Care

In terms of the quality of care, Virtual Hallway has demonstrated a positive impact as well. About 99% of PCPs agreed or strongly agreed that the service significantly enhanced patient care within the community, suggesting a boost in patient satisfaction and the likelihood of them staying within the network.

These results underscore Virtual Hallway's ability to increase capacity in primary care, and by doing so, reduce the need for external referrals and elevate the chances of retaining patients within the network.

## Conclusion

As healthcare systems strive to reduce patient leakage and enhance patient retention, Virtual Hallway phone consults offer a promising solution. Through efficient and direct communication, optimized resource use, and improved continuity of care, Virtual Hallway can contribute significantly to mitigating patient leakage and enhancing overall patient care within healthcare organizations. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, embracing such innovative solutions will be crucial in ensuring financial sustainability and delivering high-quality, coordinated care.

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