

# TECHNOLOGY: WHAT'S NEXT 2022

## Tech helps operators master the 'new normal'

Recruiting and retaining staff.....	5
Serving residents.....	9
Provider insights.....	16

# The virtual caregiver

Meet Vayyar Care, a unique, touchless, sensor solution that provides real-time resident data.



No intrusive  
cameras



No embarrassing  
wearables



No hard-to-reach  
buttons

Scan the QR code to learn more,  
or visit: [info.vayyar.com/carems4](http://info.vayyar.com/carems4)

Welcome to the  
Grayt Revolution<sup>™</sup>



# COVID-19 pandemic shifts still shaping industry's tech needs

Solutions help address workforce and resident needs – and the bottom line

BY AMY NOVOTNEY

Amid the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology continues to help skilled nursing and senior living providers connect to and strengthen their workforces, deliver a better experience for residents and positively affect the bottom line.

"The No. 1 pain point for aging services providers this year is workforce shortages, so the potential for technology to help mitigate that is definitely bubbling to the top in terms of priorities," said Majd Alwan, Ph.D., senior vice president of technology and business strategy for LeadingAge and executive director of the LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies.

Providers must take a comprehensive look at the ways that different technology applications can help alleviate workforce challenges, Alwan said.

He referred to this process as undergoing a "digital transformation," which would include taking a look at how different facets of technology – such as telehealth, interoperability, workforce management software, robotic process automation and the deployment of physical robots – all can work together to help reduce the workload and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of both clinical and nonclinical workers in the long-term care industry.

"In the era of the 'Great Resignation,' we need to think about the role that technology can play in maximizing support for the human worker, and then redesign our job descriptions around the tasks that cannot be performed by automation or a machine," Alwan said.

## Robots: a real operational solution?

Although the industry has dabbled in the use of robotics to help automate tasks and serve residents and patients for decades, "this is the first year where I'm starting to



For the first time, robots are seriously being considered as operational solutions, says Majd Alwan, Ph.D., executive director of the LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies.

see robotics – the deployment of physical robots – being truly considered as operational solutions and being seriously pursued by operators," Alwan said.

This development is because many robotics firms doubled down early in the pandemic to address earlier operational challenges with their products, and they set out to truly tailor these products for the long-term care industry, he noted. They've also significantly improved how much their robots can carry, their navigation skills and how long they can operate on a single charge.

"The most important thing, though, is the development of innovative cost structures and lease models that make some of these robotic applications more competitive than hiring workers," Alwan said.

Several senior living communities, for example, have embraced the use of Bear Robotics' Servi robots, three-tiered food runners that make trips to and from the kitchen to deliver food and bus tables,

allowing employees to remain in the dining area with residents.

Earlier this year, Cypress Cove, a life plan community in Fort Myers, FL, expanded to using three of the Servi bots to support the community's largest formal culinary venue. Through a combination of robots and process changes, the community was able to increase table responsibilities from four tables per server to six tables per server, according to Joe Velderman, vice president of innovation at Cypress Living.

"Staff are having to make far fewer trips between their section and the kitchen and are staying in their section to be more responsive and supportive of our residents," Velderman said.

In addition, he said, the community now requires fewer servers than it did pre-pandemic and has been able to reduce its dependency on front-of-house culinary staff by 330 hours per week. Those operational savings were re-invested in the com-

Photo: Bear Robotics

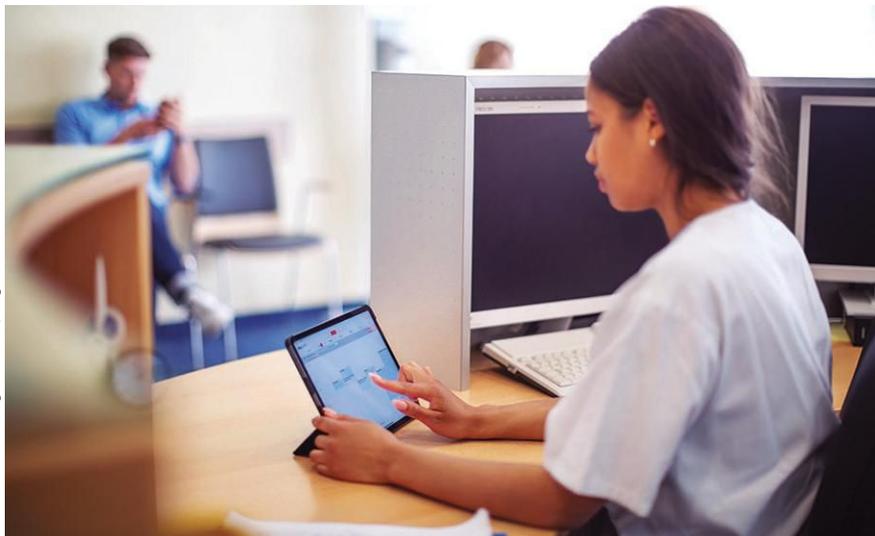


Photo: Luis Alvarez/DigitalVision/Getty Images/Plus

Operators are expected to embrace more robotic process automation to help staff members streamline time-consuming business tasks for admissions, care transitions and other areas.

munity's team members, with almost all front-of-house culinary positions receiving a 40% to 50% pay increase from pre-pandemic wages.

"We're starting to see this high wage attract more experienced talent from people who maybe don't want to work in the restaurant industry anymore and instead want to experience the benefits of working in senior living, including better hours, benefits and culture," he said.

## Improving efficiencies for workers

In addition to increases in the use of physical robots, Alwan said that this year he expects to see the industry embrace more robotic process automation to help staff members streamline time-consuming business tasks such as admissions processing, transitions of care, insurance verification, billing and administration of insurance claims.

Technology can help reduce those administrative chores, which typically fall on the shoulders of caregivers, potentially leading to frustration and burnout. It also can greatly improve staff experiences by reducing administrative tasks, allowing them to focus more on residents, he said.

Alwan also predicted that the industry will be very focused on interoperability and making sure that electronic health records have the right advanced functionalities to make

clinicians more efficient and effective day-to-day. Those include clinical decision support system tools such as pharmacy information systems that present an alert flagging a new drug that may pose a possible drug-drug interaction or contraindication.

It's about ensuring interoperability not only within the organization but also with other organizations, Alwan said.

## "I find the biggest impediment for technology in general is getting stuck in our own old ways."

— MAJD ALWAN, PH.D., LEADINGAGE

"Think of the time that nurses and managers spend on the phone with physicians' offices or with hospitals at times of admission or transitions of care," he said. "People are going to be looking very closely at how technology can help decrease the need for that."

## Tools to make hiring easier, reduce turnover

When it comes to recruiting and retaining workers, the name of the game right now is flexibility, Alwan said. Technology is one of the biggest ways for providers to give their employees more flexibility.

"Imagine if you had the tools to allow your

staff to select their own shifts — whether it's in terms of hours, or in terms of days — around their own personal needs," Alwan said. "That's a huge step for the industry, and technology vendors today are making it happen."

Other types of workforce management technologies are using artificial intelligence tools to more easily recruit workers. The tools pre-screen candidates and identify the ones who are most qualified and are most likely to be retained for a long time.

Providers also are embracing technologies that allow them to get feedback from new hires and other staff members almost instantaneously through pulse surveys, helping workers to feel more vested in a workplace when that feedback gets put into action. Apps that give employees access to earned wages before payday also are figuratively exploding in the long-term care industry, making staff members feel more empowered — and potentially more loyal — to an organization.

"All of these things can potentially help reduce turnover," Alwan said.

## Taking off the blinders

Overall, as the pandemic wanes, Alwan noted, he's optimistic about the ability of senior living and skilled nursing providers

to overcome the current challenges with a boost from technology. That is, if they can take off the blinders and look to other sectors for examples.

"Generally speaking, I find the biggest impediment for technology in general is getting stuck in our own old ways and just being comfortable with the way we always do things," he said. "But when we open ourselves up to the outside world and talk to people who come from other industries where technology has successfully transformed their sector, it can encourage us to think outside of the traditional and familiar." ■

## Tech offers promise in alleviating industry workforce challenges

Staffing shortages, turnover not new issues, but they may have new solutions

BY RACHAEL ZIMLICH, RN, BSN

When COVID-19 outbreaks started more than two years ago, long-term care leaders begged people to ride out the wave of infections. Now, as new infections remain below peak levels, those same providers are waiting for a different kind of wave to pass.

Staffing shortages and record turnover rates are battering operators across the spectrum. There are no quick fixes — the issues existed before the pandemic, after all, although the pandemic certainly exacerbated them — but technology may be able to help organizations forge ahead in new ways.

### Not new problems

Long-term care providers historically have struggled to attract and retain staff members. On the nursing end, facilities compete with hospital systems and home healthcare companies. Other staff members, in areas such as dietary and housekeeping, may be drawn to hospitality industries, where they can perform the same kind of work without the added challenges of meeting customers' healthcare needs.

Before the pandemic, turnover rates in long-term care facilities approached 90% to 100%. That percentage only has risen as COVID cases decline.

Resident and patient care is the hardest-hit area, with turnover and shortages among nurses and certified nursing aides being the most severe. About 75% of facilities now are relying on agencies for temporary help, but temporary staff can address only part of the current situation.

### The sky's the limit?

As the pandemic has increased levels of burnout and frustration among employees, the shortage of workers has motivated the

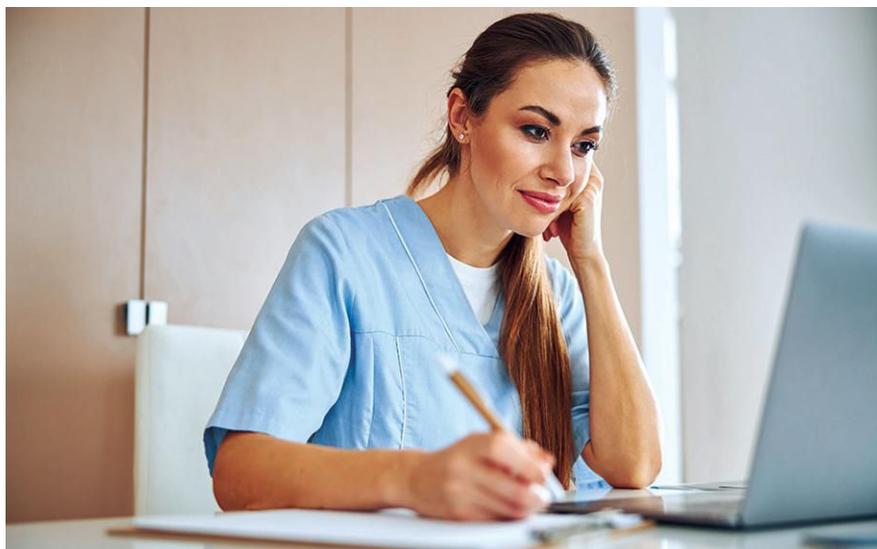


Photo: yacobchuk/Stock/Getty Images Plus

Tech may be able to help organizations inch ahead as they battle staff shortages and record turnover.

industry to offer increasingly attractive incentives in both pay and benefits.

Popular options to help recruitment and retention efforts have included sign-on bonuses, pay increases, bonuses for picking up additional hours, housing and tuition assistance, and scholarship programs.

Those incentives all come at a cost, though, and many competing employers are offering the same packages to try to win over prospective and current employees.

Continually increasing wages and temporary staffing are not sustainable solutions in the long run. Studies previously have linked increases in falls and infections in long-term care to staffing issues. Reports also show that facilities that receive lower quality ratings struggle the most with high turnover rates and low levels of worker satisfaction.

There isn't any easy answer to those issues, which may require much larger-scale changes in the culture of long-term care. Some elements are within the control of

the long-term care industry and individual providers, however, and a back-to-basics approach may be a good place to start, said Lisa McCracken, director of senior living research and development at Ziegler, a private specialty investment bank.

### Money, tech push facilities ahead

A panel of experts recently convened at the 24th Annual Ziegler LeadingAge National CFO Workshop to discuss how tech might be useful in improving workforce problems, and McCracken said that the multifaceted nature of the issue quickly became clear.

"At the end of the day, we've got to tackle this workforce issue from so many angles," she said. "It's constantly trying to see where we can be more efficient and smarter."

Finding the right job candidates and slowing turnover are the biggest issues, and McCracken said that improving communication with both current and potential

*continued on page 8*

# The Largest and Most Powerful PRN Platform in the Industry



Post your PRN shifts on ShiftKey, where fully licensed, locally sourced, independent healthcare professionals can browse and bid on open shifts, providing the coverage you need.

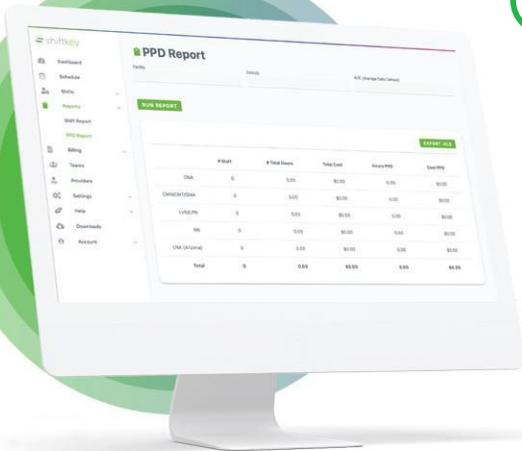
**Who you choose is up to you!**

## Powerful Time-Saving Features Including:



### Payroll Based Journal (PBJ) & Patient Per Day (PPD) Reporting Tools

The ShiftKey platform offers downloadable PBJ reports, as well as an automated PPD Report tool. The PPD report tracks staffing information (hours PPD and cost PPD) so that your facility can make appropriate staffing decisions, as well as offering an easy method for reporting staffing data to your leadership team and regulators, which helps your facility reduce overhead and save administrative time.



Shift	# Staff	# Total Hours	Total Cost	Hours PPD	Cost PPD
ON	6	528	\$5,136	5,136	\$5,136
EMERGENCY	6	528	\$5,136	5,136	\$5,136
LPN/PLN	6	528	\$5,136	5,136	\$5,136
IM	6	528	\$5,136	5,136	\$5,136
UMA (Unstaffed)	6	528	\$5,136	5,136	\$5,136
Total	6	5,136	\$51,360	5,136	\$51,360



### Single Session Multi-Shift Scheduling

- Create an entire day's PRN shift schedule and repeat that schedule across future dates
- Add shifts for multiple specialties and multiple time slots in one go (and also apply those shifts across multiple future dates)
- Quickly and easily remove multiple open shifts at once
- Reduce the amount of time spent maintaining PRN shift schedules



Over 35 MILLION HOURS scheduled

“Being able to manage my resources and stabilize my facility’s operations was amazing. All of the professionals we connected with via ShiftKey were great!”

- Administrator, MS, BS, LNFA, Dallas, TX

## Transparency

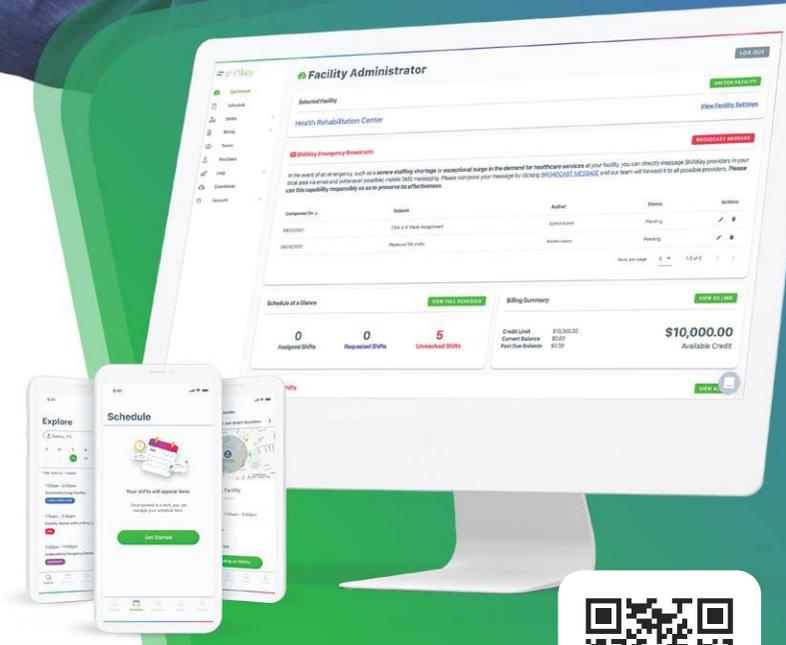
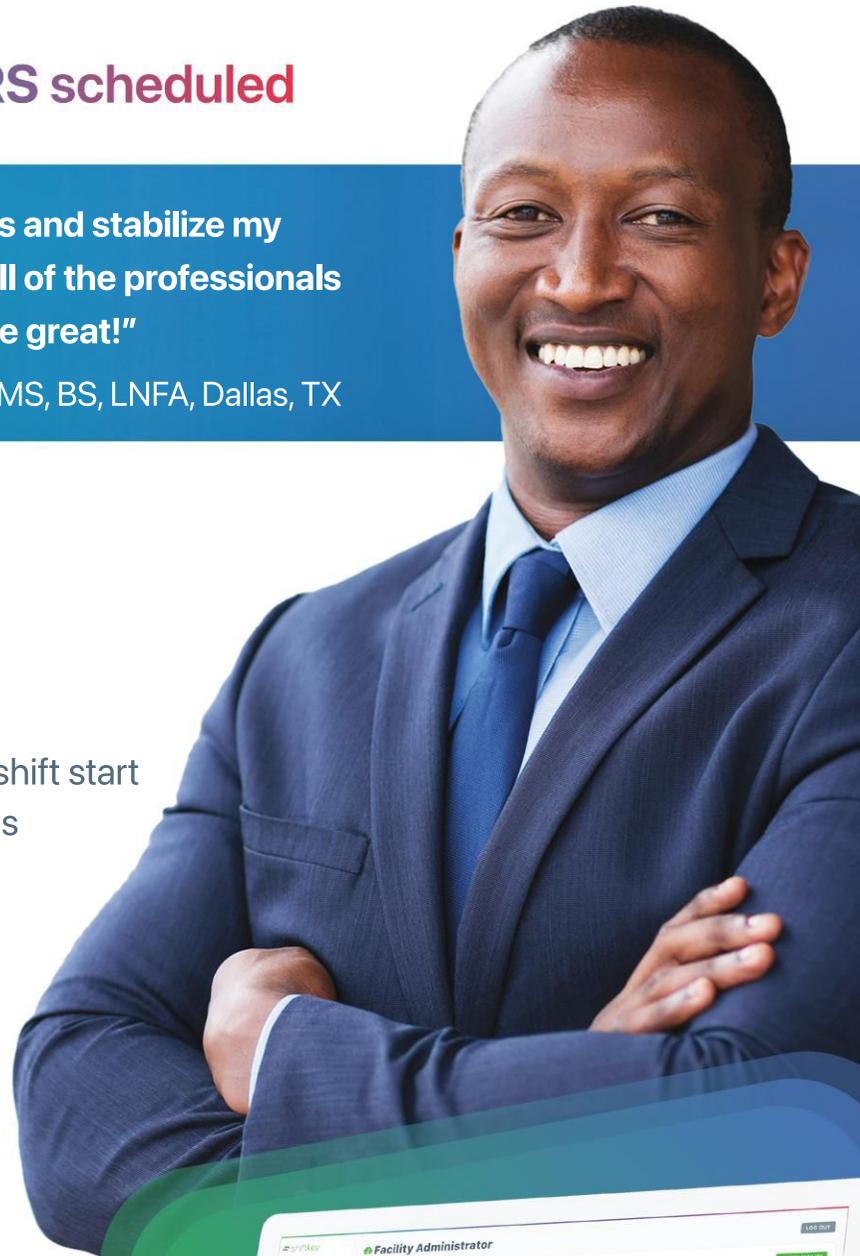
- ✓ 24/7 invoice access
- ✓ Preview costs before use
- ✓ Realtime invoice visibility
- ✓ Ability to cancel within 2 hours of shift start
- ✓ Easy access to provider credentials

## Scalability

- ✓ Add to multiple facilities
- ✓ Multi-facility access for management groups
- ✓ Support for multiple levels of care
- ✓ Pay as you use
- ✓ Bulk & repeat scheduling

## Powerful Tools

- ✓ Built-in PPD Calculator
- ✓ Set limits to manage costs
- ✓ Authorize who approves rates, and who requests & approves shifts
- ✓ Auto-generated, downloadable reports that can be used for PBJ reporting



# Recruiting and retaining staff

Photo: FG Trade/F/Getty Images Plus



Technology can streamline medication management, among other tasks.

*continued from page 5*

employees is a key to moving forward.

“Where technology can come in is to really streamline and make us be better and stronger on all those fronts,” she said, adding that for all its benefits, technology isn’t a stand-alone solution.

The long-term care industry is very skilled at researching the needs of and marketing to its target resident demographics and finding solutions to fit those needs, McCracken said. “We should be just as smart on the workforce front,” she added.

Making it easy for new hires to apply, and making sure to offer them quick follow-up, are good places to start, McCracken said.

“If it takes a long time for someone to fill out the application, and then for us to review it and get back to them – they’re already gone,” she explained. “[Some] organizations offer automatic feedback and tracking of the hiring process, and we’ve got to be so much more efficient in that. That’s not anything that’s really that sophisticated, but we’ve just got to be better at it.”

Beyond the hiring process, better communication can go a long way in improving worker satisfaction, addressing burnout and resolving workforce problems, she added.

Technology can be used for all kinds of tasks, such as improving scheduling efficiency, filling shifts, predicting fall risks and streamlining medication management.

It’s important to remember, though, that long-term care is a “technology-enabled” industry, meaning that it can’t be the only solution to every problem, McCracken said.

Technology usually only supplies a singular solution to a specific problem, she said. It’s important that providers ensure that their technology is working toward the real issues and that they are not letting piecemeal solutions and interoperability problems bog down their efforts, McCracken said.

Make sure that the tech being offered matches the needs that staff members want addressed, she advised. “I think sometimes it’s a matter of listening to what we’re hearing from the staff and then seeing if there’s a technology that can assist us with that problem,” McCracken said. “All these technology solutions are great, but if they’re not integrated and we’re not smart with it, you can have unintended consequences.”

Some tech-enabled solutions that have increased in use during the COVID era allow providers to improve recruitment follow-up, identify and recruit new workers, track applications and automate responses for new hires, streamline application processes, offer online document-signing tools, facilitate flexible staffing, communicate more efficiently and offer flexible payment.

Flexible pay structures have been a big demand as the “gig economy” takes hold, according to Jeannie Walden, chief mar-

keting officer at Daily Pay. Systems such as those created by Daily Pay allow employees to access their earnings more quickly without burdening payroll departments.

Almost 40% of Americans run out of money between paychecks, Walden said – and that statistic was observed before today’s inflation problems. Flexible pay products allow employers to offer a perk that another employer – perhaps with similar pay rates – might not.

Pre-pay day advances aren’t the only perk to those payroll programs, either. Employers can offer payment for bonuses or shift incentives immediately, and employees can take advantage of pre-tax allowances by moving those funds right to investment or savings accounts. It’s also a win for recruiters, who can offer a “start today, get paid tomorrow” incentive to new hires.

Some less common benefits to flexible pay systems exist, too. For example, Daily Pay offers Cycle, which lets employers find alternate ways to pay workers when a crisis or natural disaster might otherwise disrupt the typical payroll process. One recent example of this, Walden said, was when an ice storm hit Texas. Daily Pay was able to help a grocer pay more than 100,000 employees electronically while the weather derailed traditional payroll processes.

Those technology solutions might not seem exciting or glamorous, but they often succeed at addressing the issues employees and employers worry about most, Walden said. The pandemic helped speed the adoption of various platforms and uses, and it’s up to employers to find the best tools to attract and keep the right workers.

It’s been a rough few years, but McCracken said that tech innovators are particularly skilled when it comes to finding creative solutions to complex problems under pressure. Hope is on the horizon, she said.

“There’s a lot of doom and gloom out there right now about workforce issues and challenges, but there are some solutions that can absolutely help and make you progress further along the way,” she said. “There have been some wins and incremental gains. The promise of that is a nice, positive way to look at the pressures.” ■



Photo: Bear Robotics

## Array of technology helps providers better serve residents

BY KIMBERLY BONVISSUTO

Long-term care providers are creatively implementing technology to address challenges related to workforce shortages, improve resident satisfaction, prevent falls, improve health and safety outcomes and encourage socialization. The bottom-line result is serving residents better.

### Robots for dining services

For instance, robots are becoming a common sight in dining rooms, taking on the mundane tasks of delivering meals and running dishes back to the kitchen from the dining room.

"The great thing about the robots is that they augment our services' role by doing the tasks that don't take a warm smile or a caring person to do," The Springs Living CEO Fee Stubblefield said. "This frees up staff to focus on their relationships with residents, whose feedback has been overwhelmingly positive."

Produced by Bear Robotics in Silicon Valley, Servi robots have three tiers on which trays can be placed to deliver hot food from the kitchen quickly and to return empty dishes. Each robot can hold up to 66 pounds and has a 12-hour battery life. Illinois-based IT services and consulting firm ServingIntel recently announced a partnership with Bear Robotics to distribute the robots to the dining services sector in senior living communities and restaurants.

The Springs Living launched the robot servers at The Springs at Lake Oswego in August, gradually adding more robots in other communities. Based on positive feedback from dining staff members and residents, the company plans to continue to add more robots this year.

Juniper Village at Bucks County is piloting the use of the robots to help the dining services department run more efficiently. Juniper Communities Regional Director of Dining Services Kris Kishbaugh told the

Robots in the dining room can free up more time for staff members to spend with residents.

Lower Bucks Times that he expects Servi to assist dining operations in several ways, including expediting food delivery, bussing tables, reducing breakage and delivering meals to rooms.

White Horse Village similarly added the robots to its dining services team. Residents of the Newtown Square, PA, nonprofit senior living community named their robot "Robbie."

"Residents think Robbie is cute, and they like the music it plays while motoring about the restaurant," said Jim Snively, chair of the White Horse Resident Association Dining Advisory Committee. "Robbie carries meals to our table promptly, ensuring they are served hot, allowing servers to pay more attention to their assigned tables and relieving them from carrying heavy trays."

Simpson Senior Services Communities also adopted the Servi robots as part of a partnership announced last fall with Sodexo involving its Philadelphia communities.

Along with the robots, Sodexo introduced "Happy or Not" touchscreen kiosks at Simpson communities to provide feedback on each meal, a Bite app enabling browsing of upcoming menus and nutrition information for specific dishes, and a meal tracker to capture resident food preferences, restrictions and nutritional needs.

### Mobility technologies

At White Horse Village, Servi joins the other technology implemented on campus, including Zeen mobility devices and K4Connect community systems for home automation, communication, engagement and voice technologies, as well as team and operator tools.

Several White Horse Village residents participated in a Zeen trial, contributing to the final version of the technology making its debut at the community last year. Residents inspired the product concept when Exokinetic CEO Garret Brown, whose mother lives in the community, saw how challenging walkers and wheelchairs were to maneuver.

# Serving residents

The mobility device uses lifting technology and casters to help users get around. The Zeen moves to standing, walking and barstool heights, and it lowers to become a chair. The device has become a useful tool for physical therapists as well.

## Preventive care

Improving health outcomes for residents is another area where technology is serving senior living communities. Legacy Senior Communities in Dallas recently announced the implementation of Trueloo smart toilets by Toi Labs in resident homes.

The early detection toilet seat helps identify potential health issues — such as urinary tract infections, dehydration, bleeding and infectious diseases — in the privacy of an older adult's residence.

"This expedites our care response and can potentially avoid a health complication altogether," Legacy CEO Melissa Orth said.

Legacy began piloting the units in March in memory support at the healthcare centers of two retirement communities. The assisted living and memory care communities will continue manual monitoring to establish a control group.

"We decided to trial the smart toilets in two different service areas," Legacy Senior Director of Strategic Development Bridgette Walshe said. "We want to ensure that this technology is noninvasive and nonintrusive while providing accurate, proactive and relevant data."

Maple Knoll Communities also is using technology to improve outcomes and reduce falls. The Cincinnati-based continuing care retirement community deployed CarePredict's technology platform across the almost 400 independent living, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing residences on its 54-acre campus.

The technology includes smart wearable devices to indicate potential health declines, location insights, staff alerts, communication, keyless door entry and point-of-sale systems.

"As a technology-first group, Maple Knoll believes within the energy of innovation and that expertise can and does make life simpler for residents, workers and households,"



Photo: Toi Labs

Smart toilets help identify potential health issues in the privacy of an older adult's residence.

Maple Knoll Vice President and Chief Innovation Officer Andy Craig said.

Heritage Senior Living in Wisconsin also is using technology for falls management. The senior living provider is partnering with Dele Health Tech in an effort to maintain resident dignity and provide falls management using sensor technology.

"We are always looking for innovative technology solutions that enhance care, save time and optimize operations," Heritage IT Manager Dallas Behling said, adding that the partnership offers "seamless integrations with our current systems and are technologically flexible."

Heritage Vice President of Clinical and Quality Services Amanda Runnoe said the technology will allow the senior living provider to be more efficient in its daily operations and caregiving. The technology, she added, offers privacy for residents by using sensor technology as opposed to traditional camera or video monitoring.

"No longer do we have to worry about how long someone was lying on the floor and unable to reach a pull cord or access a pendant," Runnoe said. "Maintaining resident dignity was also very important to our team and families."

Data streams from in-apartment smart devices provide real-time alerts, allowing care teams to respond quickly to resident fall incidents and indicate outcomes with one touch.

## Socialization

Solera Senior Living, saying it is always looking at innovation and technology to advance the senior living experience, launched Social Bots at its communities across the country. The robots serve as a complement to Solera's life enrichment program, offering another way to promote engagement through interesting and unique touches, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing Anna Wynn told *McKnight's*.

Each of the seven communities uses their social bot in a different way, from greeting people and answering questions to entertainment and dance parties, Wynn said, adding that its eighth community is working on getting its own social bot.

"When we say we are hospitality-focused at Solera, we believe it is our core responsibility to push the frontiers of knowledge and then connect these types of advancement to the older population in order to, quite simply, enhance their lives," Wynn said. ■

# 'Magic tables' provide stimulation for memory care residents

BY KIMBERLY BONVISSUTO

**T**able top gaming consoles – so-called magic tables – are taking off in memory care communities, providing an easy way to stimulate the brains of those with memory-impairing diseases.

Wheelock Terrace Assisted Living in Hanover, NH, and Tulsa, OK-based Senior Star are using the consoles to draw residents out of their shells, promote eye-hand coordination, improve memory recall and range of motion, and encourage social interaction.

The systems are similar in that a ceiling-mounted console projects lifelike virtual images onto a table. The systems engage social, physical and cognitive areas of the brain, using infrared sensors to detect movement and engagement from users. Both systems were designed specifically for use in cognitively impaired people, although they have potential use for other groups.

The residents of Wheelock Terrace Assisted Living are using Tovertafel gaming consoles from the Netherlands. Dutch for "magic table," the Tovertafel system is shared with other Wheelock Terrace communities, including Valley Terrace in White River Junction, VT, and Woodstock Terrace in Woodstock, VT. Plans are in the works to secure a system for each community.

Wheelock Terrace Marketing / Admission Coordinator Pudge Eaton told *McKnight's* that she first saw a Tovertafel in action in 2018. Wheelock Terrace was the first community in New Hampshire, and one of only two in the New England region, to adopt the system last November.

Residents have at least 35 games to choose from – a list that continues to grow with each software update – and simply can use their hands to control the scene before them. Games also can be projected onto the floor, allowing residents to use their feet to kick virtual balls.



Photo: Tovertafel

The table top gaming consoles offer various levels of participation to coincide with the different stages of memory impairment that residents are experiencing.

The system offers various levels of participation to coincide with the stages of memory impairment residents are experiencing.

"It's amazing to see the change in a resident's demeanor when they're engaged with the Tovertafel," Wheelock Terrace Life Enrichment Director Cindy Wiegand said. "I've seen memory care residents who are typically withdrawn or even nonverbal engage with the Tovertafel; they laugh, smile, make eye contact and get excited when they're able to reach out and touch a goldfish or flower petal."

Senior Star similarly adopted the use of a magic table from Colorado-based Lucynt in its memory care communities.

The Lucynt console features more than 100 electronic games on a tabletop, with ever-changing images and accompanying sounds. The interactive system is available to residents 24/7 – motion-activated technology allows the games to be played without the help of an employee.

Senior Star Director of Learning and

Development Taylor Hernandez told *McKnight's* that the idea for using a magic table actually came from a program idea challenge to staff members during a February 2021 virtual company meeting.

"What we liked about Lucynt was the ease of the program – it's 'plug and play,'" Hernandez said, adding that systems were installed in each of the company's four memory care communities. There is no subscription, but the company pays a support fee that keeps the system updated.

Hernandez said that staff members appreciate that the system was designed with input from healthcare professionals.

"It's designed to make the lives of those who live and work in a dementia care setting more meaningful," she said. "Anything and everything that we collectively – senior living and memory care, specifically – can do that can make the world of our associates as supported and as easy to engage with residents as possible, it's what we all strive to do." ■

# “Did Karen just at the touch

**America’s premier MDS outsourcing company since 2008, MDS Consultants is helping long-term care facilities nationwide solve problems and increase revenue using little-known coding strategies. And chances are, we can help your company too.**

Whether you’re struggling to keep your MDS Coordinators, obtain proper reimbursement for treatment, stop fiscal draining or accrue CMS ratings worthy of your facility, even the seemingly tiniest data entry can have a BIG impact.

That’s why MDS Consultants is one of the most valued compliance services in the industry. Here’s how we maximize your MDS submissions and completions at a glance:



Gloria Brent, RN  
CEO MDS Consultants

## **30 Years Healthcare Experience**

A healthcare professional for 30 years, CEO Gloria Brent has been certified in MDS Assessment since 1998 and helping others with MDS compliance since 2008. While others “created” outsourcing services during COVID-19,

we invented it.

## **ZERO State Deficiencies**

Errors are time consuming, costly and widespread. But in 14 years of operation, we’ve never had ANY state deficiencies in our accuracy of assessments. So you can relax about your reporting and enjoy the peace of mind you and your staff deserve.

## **Audited Employees**

Unlike other firms, our MDS assessment nurses are full-time company staff who complete extensive in-house training and pass random internal compliance audits. Assuring YOU the most skillful, up-to-date expertise.

## **Stress-Free Submissions**

The staffing crisis has floor nurses feeling more tense than nurturing. By working remotely, our compliance staff maintains laser-sharp focus, high energy and meticulous submissions. Letting your care-givers get back to what they love—providing quality, compassionate care.

## **High ROI**

We help our clients recoup, retain or gain CMS 5-Star Ratings and avoid State Department of Health and other government penalties. Plus generate the highest points for PDPM payments—for a measurable fiscal return on your investment that’s among the most reliable and reputable in the industry.



**Pioneers of MDS Outsourcing**

# dodge a CMS bullet of a button?"

—MDS Consultants LIVE!  
webinar attendee, June 2022

Resident	John Doe	Identifier	53248	Date	6/12/2022
<b>Section C</b>		<b>Cognitive Patterns</b>			
<b>C0100. Should Brief Interview for Mental Status (C0200-C0500) be Conducted?</b> Attempt to conduct interview with all residents					
Enter Code	0. No (resident is rarely/never understood) → Skip to and complete C0700-C1000, Staff Assessment for Mental Status 1. Yes → Continue to C0200, Repetition of Three Words				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
<b>Brief Interview for Mental Status (BIMS)</b>					
<b>C0200. Repetition of Three Words</b>					
Ask resident: "I am going to say three words for you to remember. Please repeat all three. The words are: <b>sock, blue, and bed</b> . Now tell me the three words."					
Enter Code	<b>Number of words repeated after first attempt</b> 0. None 1. One 2. Two 3. Three				
<input type="checkbox"/>					
After the resident's first attempt, repeat the words using cues ("sock of furniture"). You may repeat the words up to two more times.					
<b>C0300. Temporal Orientation</b> (orientation to year, month, day, day of week, season, time of day)					
Ask resident: "Please tell me what year it is right now."					
Enter Code	<b>A. Able to report correct year</b> 0. Missed by > 5 years or no answer 1. Missed by 2-5 years 2. Missed by 1 year 3. Correct				
<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ask resident: "What month is it right now?"					
<b>C0500. BIMS Summary</b>					
Enter Score	Add up scores for questions C0200-C0400 and fill in total score (00-15)				
<input type="checkbox"/>					
Enter 99 if the resident was unable to complete the interview					

*"MDS Completion Services makes it easy to increase your reimbursements because we carry SNF Quality Reporting data thresholds in our hearts and minds. One dash can send your payment score spiraling."*

—Karen Davis RN, BSN, RAC-CTA  
MDS Consultants presenter

*What a difference a dash makes! These are costly.*

*On any given day, the MDS determines roughly 80% of our revenue. From training, auditing and completion, MDS Consultants has increased our MDS accuracy significantly.*

Mark Wheeler  
Administrator  
Father Baker Manor



## Turn Rules Into Jewels

With so much hanging in the balance, why risk falling behind on the reimbursements you earn every day?

MDS Consultants makes catching up on—and keeping up with—your MDS completions fast and easy. Contact us and ask about our 24-48 hour start time today!

**Call (954) 637-3235**

or visit [www.MDSCompletion.com/StartNow](http://www.MDSCompletion.com/StartNow)



Don't worry. We've got this.

## Independent living residents face barriers to telemedicine benefits

BY KIMBERLY BONVISSUTO

Telehealth use has increased greatly over the course of the pandemic, but new research suggests that some long-term care residents are able to take advantage of the tech more than others.

Perceived limitations to video visits, new technology learning curves and a preference for in-person care create substantial barriers to independent living residents connecting to care providers through telemedicine, according to a Stanford University study.

Researchers surveyed and interviewed residents at two Northern California independent living communities between September 2020 and March 2021 to better understand barriers to telemedicine and how to improve access and the experience.

One community, identified by the authors as Site A, was home to mostly middle and upper middle class native English speakers, whereas the second site, identified as Site B, provided subsidized senior housing and served a large population of non-English-speaking residents. The sites were chosen to try to better understand the needs of older adults with differing socioeconomic and language backgrounds.

The largest reported barriers to telemed-



Photo: Marko Gaber/Digital Vision/Getty Images Plus

Hearing difficulties, unfamiliarity with how to use technology or the internet, not knowing how to connect to the telemedicine program and language issues are challenges faced by some residents.

outside of a clinic (24.5%); poor internet connectivity (15.7%) or lack of smart devices (12.9%); or difficulties with attention and memory (13.3%), expressing oneself (12.4%) or seeing (8.4%).

Top barriers for Site A included not knowing how to connect to the platform (24%), lack of familiarity with the technology (22.4%) and difficulty hearing (15.2%). At

### Support, training helpful

The researchers found that independent living residents are more familiar with telephones than online video platforms, although most (53%) participants said they were interested in using telemedicine to connect with care providers through video visits.

“Given a multitude of institution-specific platforms used for telemedicine, it is important to make sure platforms are streamlined and easy to use, or consider adopting platforms that already have widespread social adoption,” the authors wrote.

On-demand telephone or in-person support for troubleshooting, as well as caregiver training, also would be beneficial, they said.

The study, published in *JMIR Aging*, was conducted by Stanford University in partnership with Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System and the On Lok Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly in San Jose, CA. ■

“It is important to make sure platforms are streamlined and easy to use.”

- STUDY AUTHORS

icine visits for the 249 participants were hearing difficulties (35.7%), unfamiliarity with how to use technology or the internet (30.1%), not knowing how to connect to the telemedicine platform (29.7%) and language issues (26.5%).

Other barriers from both sites included a lack of resident interest in seeing providers

this community, 30% of participants did not perceive any barriers to accessing telemedicine via video visits. Top barriers reported at Site B included the inability to speak English well (54.6%), not being familiar with the technology or internet (37%) and a lack of interest in seeing a provider outside of the clinic (35.3%).



## 'Concierge' program transforming tech use in long-term care

BY KIMBERLY BONVISSUTO

A little program to gauge resident interest in learning new technologies has blossomed into a technology concierge program that one long-term care provider sees as potentially transformative for the industry.

Four years ago, Watermark Retirement Communities' IT director was working with the company's Fountains at La Cholla, a Tucson, AZ, independent living, assisted living and memory care community, on introducing residents to Chromebooks through the Engage! Powered by Google program. Each resident received a Google Chromebook for the eight-week program, which included workshops and individual coaching sessions.

When the workshop ended, residents were clamoring for more. So Watermark Director of Strategic Innovation Tammy

Farris asked if the community would pilot a technology support position.

The rest, as they say, is history.

**"What surprised me ... is how it's grown into more of an education and support role for the residents."**

**- TAMMY FARRIS, WATERMARK**

Farris told *McKnight's* that Watermark initially had Best Buy's Geek Squad in mind when they came up with the concept of a technology concierge, someone who would provide individual services and help residents fix their technology.

When residents feel comfortable with technology, they can leverage the tools and resources being brought to bear in the industry.

"What surprised me as it developed is how it's grown into more of an education and support role for the residents," she said. "It's not just about fixing their technology so they can connect in the moment. It's about building their confidence, building trust, teaching them about new technology [and] helping them consider things that might help them — especially with hearing- and seeing-impaired folks.

"This turned into a much greater resource than I ever imagined."

Today, 10 Watermark communities each have a full-time technology concierge on staff providing on-call tech support and offering classes through Watermark University, with topics including iPhone 101 and how to spot scammers online.

"I think they are probably the MVP in each one of their communities," Farris said, adding that she initially was concerned that residents would have a difficult time grasping the technology. "We learned quite the opposite. They embrace it, they enjoy it, they want to learn."

Although the program launched before the pandemic, Farris said, community lockdowns and visitation restrictions created an even greater need for the technology concierge role.

Farris said she has been asked to speak on panels about the position, along with Ricky Garrett, Watermark's first technology concierge, who remains in the role today. Farris said she anticipates seeing the concept spread to more communities in the future.

"As our industry becomes more tech-enabled and we start to see the boomers coming and the different generations coming into senior living, it's going to be more important than ever to have tech support and education," she said. "But it's also important to have them feel comfortable with it so they can be leveraging all the different tools and resources being brought to bear in this industry. It's transforming all the time." ■

# Digital check-in technology helps guests, staff and vendors

BY SANDY VASQUEZ

As an administrator of a 40-bed assisted living facility, I'm always on the lookout for ways to streamline procedures to spend less time on data management and more meaningful time with residents.

With the pandemic increasing work and creating heavier burdens to maintain health and safety for residents and staff, it also required us to keep up with ever-changing governmental guidelines. Even something as simple as the visitors' log became time-consuming, as we needed to collect contact information, COVID-19 symptoms questionnaires and temperatures. As a way to make the process easier and eliminate paper-based logs, many QR code-based digital apps emerged. To my surprise, not all QR code apps are the same.

### How QR code-based apps work

Although most people fundamentally understand how QR code-based apps work because they've used them at restaurants or when entering public venues, it's different when you're responsible for setting one up at a facility. The good news is that you get it up and running in just a few minutes. Administrators can go to the tech vendor's website, sign up with a credit card and print their own QR code poster. Within a few minutes, they can start checking in visitors.

Visitors can point their smartphones at the dedicated QR code on the poster. On the phone's screen, they'll be asked to fill out their contact information. Depending on the facility's or the state's protocols, visitors may be asked whether they have been vaccinated or are feeling flu-like symptoms. The sign-in process is complete in seconds. Visitors, depending on how they respond to the questions, will receive a digital green screen to enter the facility.



“Long-term care facilities should be at the forefront of adopting digital technologies.”

— SANDY VASQUEZ

### 5 requirements for the technology

As you evaluate which QR code-based app is right for your facility, here are five key criteria:

- 1. A dedicated QR code.** Make sure the code is not randomly pulled online. You want a dedicated QR code for each facility, so you can always know who is or was visiting without worrying about security due to a questionable origin of the QR code. The best way to ensure the validity of the code is to work with a tech vendor that is focused on developing this type of technology and is readily available to answer your questions.
- 2. Privacy.** You want assurance that guest and vendor check-in information remains private. As you evaluate vendors, ask

where the check-in data are saved and who has access to them. Ideally, the data should be securely stored in an Amazon or Google cloud. Of note, when our facility moved to a private digital check-in app from Safe Site Check In, we also realized that we finally could get rid of the outdated paper sign-in book that was at the front desk. Along with keeping visitor information private, it saved us lots of time previously spent keeping track of the sign-in paperwork.

- 3. Customization.** You should be able to modify the check-in questions or create your own, including the ability to notify staff members when visitors arrive and leave. I also recommend inserting a picture of your facility and your logo on the app so visitors know its use is approved and affiliated with the building. Doing so makes guests feel safer about signing in through an app.
- 4. Reports.** It helps to run a regular report on visitor check-ins. Doing so tells you how many people are in the building at any given time, the frequency of guests for residents and how long they stay, for example. The information also helps with facility management, capacity planning and staffing. And in the event of an emergency evacuation, you can easily inform rescuers who is in the building.
- 5. Unlimited check-in.** Look for a flat-fee based option instead of paying per visitor or based on the size of the facility.

Long-term care facilities should be at the forefront of adopting digital technologies. Doing so promotes health and safety of residents and visitors as well as operational efficiency and data integrity. Digital check-in technology is a critical step forward to achieving that effort. ■

*Sandy Vasquez is administrator of Campbell Creek House, Anchorage, AK.*

# How we can prepare for the future of healthcare technology

BY PAT MULLOY

Over the past few years in senior living, we have seen many anticipated technologic changes come to sudden fruition. Businesses that promised more digital care options for years found they no longer could drag their feet, implementing new telehealth platforms, capital management systems and recruitment solutions. Ready or not, the future of healthcare technology is on its way.

It hasn't escaped my notice, or the notice of my peers, that although many of these changes were long-anticipated, it took the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic to set them in motion. Our industry's response to the pandemic has proven that healthcare will adapt to changing circumstances not when it's fully prepared, but when it has to.

Although the reality of updating to a new generation of healthcare technology may be daunting, this moment also brings ample opportunities to make healthcare a more supportive, innovative and flexible industry in which to work. Starting now, there are ways to reduce the work ahead by preparing for the healthcare technology of the future.

### Bringing equal access into the conversation

The explosion of telehealth services over the past two years has been absolutely tremendous. With telehealth newly implemented or newly popular in so many environments, there's no reason to expect it to fall out of fashion. Just as many employees are growing accustomed to working from home and older Americans are planning to age in place, residents and patients are getting used to the idea of accessing digital healthcare.

In some cases, this development may greatly increase healthcare accessibility. Theoretically, telehealth allows rural residents access to specialists they otherwise



“Addressing the talent shortage is the most important task facing new technologies today.”

— PAT MULLOY

never would be able to see, and it gives individuals with mobility impairments an easier way to connect with providers.

But not everyone has a broadband connection, and those who do and do not are divided along the lines of income, location and disability. Telehealth will not be an equitable solution until broadband access also is equitable. We need influential voices in healthcare advocating for internet equity and framing digital access as a healthcare issue, because that is exactly what we're dealing with.

### Approaching the future with integrated platforms

Internally, the best thing individual busi-

nesses can do to prepare for the future of healthcare technology is to ensure that their existing platforms can integrate with other software. Without integrations, healthcare leaders will need absurdly complex networks of software solutions to manage talent and provide care.

Isolated systems are both inefficient and uninformative. Inefficient, because digital technology is not living up to its promise if workers still need to spend hours manually porting information between platforms. Uninformative, because only an integrated system can provide useful data on where a talent management process is consistently breaking down.

Our recruiting platforms need to work with our onboarding software, which needs to connect to our employee management systems, which must interact with our capital management clients. Any system that cannot integrate will inevitably drag down our processes and eventually become defunct.

Leaders can get ahead in one of two ways. Either by prioritizing software that delivers a full-service staffing model or by only using tools that offer robust integrations.

### Managing new healthcare shifts

As healthcare employers grapple with the ongoing talent shortage, some will need to embrace greater shift flexibility to keep their businesses operating. This flexibility may take the form of shorter and more flexible shifts, a change that some healthcare workers have been requesting for years.

Do these unconventional shifts offer any benefit to employers? Certainly. With greater flexibility, more candidates will be able to fit healthcare work into their lives. By offering those shifts, you increase the odds of successfully employing parents, students and even part-time workers who have additional jobs.

# Provider insights

In addition to those new shifts, some employers are dealing with entirely new roles, such as infection preventionists. Because healthcare work is constantly changing, our software will need to adapt rapidly. Talent management software must be flexible enough to account for a changing workforce and a non-standard workday.

## Prioritizing time-to-hire and finding more candidates

Whenever we talk about the future of healthcare, staffing lies at the heart of the conversation. Our future success depends on our ability to attract new healthcare workers and retain those already in the industry. Addressing the talent shortage is the most important task facing new technologies today.

As it stands, healthcare has one of the slowest hiring processes of any industry. Some of this comes with the territory. Any highly specialized position will take time

to fill, and healthcare is full of such positions. But slow hiring also happens thanks to red tape, inefficient processes and antiquated software. To put a fine point on this problem, it is not possible to rapidly expand healthcare staffing if promising entry-level candidates are dragged along on a lengthy hiring journey and receive competing offers along the way.

Individual businesses may be able to avoid lengthy time-to-hire with the help of recruitment technology, but healthcare hiring still is a competitive world. In this case, falling behind other businesses' success is an assurance of failure.

In the future, we can expect recruitment technology that is centered around reducing time-to-hire. Candidate sourcing, interviews, screening, placement and onboarding all will need to happen more quickly to keep up with steadily increasing demand.

Rapid hiring is the only way for individual

businesses to secure employment with established workers. This, and connecting with and engaging first-time healthcare workers, are the only ways to ensure successful staffing.

Although many challenges are ahead, we are in an overwhelmingly exciting moment for healthcare staffing and operations. It's notable that so many of these changes center on improving access to both work and care. We have the opportunity right now to proactively shape a better future for healthcare workers and businesses. ■

*Pat Mulloy was named CEO of Sharps Compliance in April. He is the former CEO of Elm-croft Senior Living and Atria Senior Living. In May, he completed a term as the chairman of the board for Argentum. As of the time of the writing of this piece, he was a member of the advisory board for Applio, an end-to-end healthcare staffing solution.*

 **McKnights**

# PODCAST

Tacking timely issues with prominent industry leaders

Follow us wherever you listen to podcasts.



**TURN IT UP!**





# Tech Awards + Summit

**2022**

Celebrating outstanding innovation by skilled nursing, senior living and home care providers.

Entries are now open, submit a nomination today!



# A program *laser-focused* on the future of caregiving tech.

## FEATURING

### *2022 Keynote*

## Dr. Joseph Kvedar

Chair of the Telemedicine Association, Harvard Medical School  
Professor, and Connected Health Pioneer

### The Seismic Impact of Digital Health on Care Delivery



### *General Sessions*

on the outlook of caregiving technology

### *Panel Discussions*

on remote patient monitoring, telemedicine,  
diagnostics and data analytics

### *Case Studies*

from early adopters of the tech explored by each  
panel – including what's working and what isn't.

### *Solutions Showcase*

of 48 innovative caregiving technology solutions to  
easily compare products within a category

# HCT

For Home Care & Senior Living

**September 6-8**  
National Harbor, MD

Special McKnights Senior Living Offer:

[hctexpo.com/mksl](https://hctexpo.com/mksl)