

TAKING THE LEAD



Helen Choo of Front Porch CIW trains a community health worker on remote monitoring equipment.

Photo: Front Porch Center for Innovation & Wellbeing

Front Porch answers call for telehealth innovation and care

By Julie Williamson

As technology-enabled solutions take hold in the seniors housing and care segment, it's understandable that providers are seeing telehealth as a way to transform care delivery and promote wellness in older adults.

Front Porch is one provider leading the telehealth charge — tapping unique opportunities created by its Front Porch Center for Innovation & Wellbeing (Front Porch Center), and through joint ventures with some of the nation's leading technology solutions providers, academic institutions and multidisciplinary healthcare partners.

"We focus on any technology-enabled interaction that can help with wellness, overall," says Kari Olson, chief technology officer of Front Porch and president of the Front Porch Center. "Our projects run the gamut of traditional telehealth but we also look at technology from a

broader, more blended perspective."

As Olson explains, the goal is to provide older adults with access to an array of technological tools to empower them with their health and wellness. A recent example is a mobile medication reminder pilot program that puts mobile phones in the hands of older adults, so they can receive alerts when it is time to take their medication.

Remote responsiveness

In June, Front Porch Center and IntelGE Care Innovations announced a partnership to measure the benefits of remote patient monitoring in select senior living residents at two Front Porch communities in California. Participants will gain access to a video chat platform to virtually connect with a caregiver.

Pilot participants at Kingsley Manor and Claremont Manor will conduct daily health sessions to capture vital signs, such as blood pressure, weight,

oxygen levels and glucose levels, engage in health assessments, and gather other information, so caregivers can better manage care plans, promote medication adherence, and monitor health and wellness changes.

A telepodiatry pilot conducted in partnership with a community-based health clinic has resulted in more than 30 virtual consultations between podiatry specialists and residents in Front Porch affordable housing communities. "Those involved in our podiatry teleconsults were thrilled that they could instantly meet the care provider through technology, without having to travel to and from the doctor's office," says Davis Park, director of the Front Porch Center.

"We also did a telemental health pilot, and we heard from some participants that the virtual distance created a more comfortable experience that made it easier for them to open up with the therapists," Davis notes, adding that 75% of telemental health participants report feeling much better as a result. Aside from anecdotal findings, research partners, such as UCSF and USC, provide Front Porch with validated, outcomes-based measurements of telehealth offerings.

Olson estimates that telehealth offerings will reach 80% to 90% of older adults residing in Front Porch communities, but she and Park are quick to point out that telehealth and other technology-enabled solutions aren't just being limited to Front Porch community residents. Front Porch Center, in partnership with the University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry, kicked off a teledentistry project in August that connects low-income, underserved older adults with dental hygienists who deliver preventive and simple therapeutic services directly in the community setting. Portable X-ray machines, dental chairs and laptop computers allow hygienists to offer basic dental care virtually anywhere there's a sink installed. ■