

# Virtual house calls improve quality of care at senior communities

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There is a new telemedicine technology available at some area senior communities providing staff, residents and doctors with the ability of having a virtual face-to-face conversation about a health issue of concern for the elderly. This telemedicine intervention may potentially avoid a trip to the hospital for the elderly resident.

This cutting-edge technology is called eSNF (Electronic Skilled Nursing Facility) Patient Care. The eSNF services are available for elder residents living in a senior community after hours, weekends and holiday — times when attending physicians may not be available to see a resident in person.

Statistics show these “virtual house calls” are significantly cutting down on hospital re-admissions for residents at senior living communities utilizing this technology. This technology also improves patients’ outcomes and increases resident and family satisfaction.

“No one ever wants to go to the hospital, and for elderly residents, this often means spending uncomfortable and intimidating hours in the emergency room,” says Dolores Redner, director of health services at Paul’s Run Retirement Community in Northeast Philadelphia. “eSNF technology allows residents to remain in their ‘home,’ receive the physician-directed care they need and continue to be cared for by the staff they know.”

When a nurse identifies a change in the medical condition of a resident during eSNF hours, the nurse will place a phone call to the eSNF physician. After discussing the change with the nurse, the physician might ask to examine the resident. A mobile telemedicine unit is wheeled into the resident’s room and the physician appears on the screen, allowing him or her to talk with, examine and treat the resident.

“Using the eSNF unit has been an exciting experience,” says Jen Mackaman, unit manager at Artman in Ambler. “We all marvel when the doctor pops up on the screen. It is thrilling to have this technology at our communities. I see it as a win-win for all.”

Be sure to ask about eSNF when searching for a senior living community for yourself or a loved one.