Point-of-Care Analyzer Makes Home-based Care Possible

Home is where the heart is. Now, previous frequent visitors to the emergency department can have medical care at home, assisted by a professional team. This mobile care team brings benefits to patients, relatives, and physicians, as well as to hospitals, in the Swedish county of Ängelholm.

Text: Per Simonsen
“We have to work in a coordinated manner. And communicate with all players.”

Marie Bladh, head of the home care team in the Ängelholm Hospital, Sweden

Be: “We provide care to two main groups: older patients with acute conditions and those who need regular advanced medical treatment. Now, this can happen at the patient’s home, away from over-crowded emergency departments,” says Bladh. In the few cases when hospital care is essential, patients can be admitted directly to the ward without going through the emergency department. “The results are appreciated by patients, relatives, and doctors, as well as benefitting hospitals. This is something new. And you have to remember that these are our very seriously ill patients, many of them in their last year of life. A year that they now can spend at home, not in hospital,” says Bladh.

Daily 6–7 patient visits

Two mobile teams with one nurse and one doctor each visit 6–7 patients every day. In the beginning, visits may be weekly, but as the care plan is implemented the visits become less frequent. By then, both the patients and the doctors know what to do. The treatment plan has been optimized.

Each team is equipped with a multitude of tools for diagnosis and treatment in just four bags. Apart from the blood gas analyzer and a C-reactive protein (CRP) testing instrument, they carry a bladder scanner to monitor urine retention. They can also administer blood transfusions and intravenous antibiotics.

Future perspectives

When asked about the future, Bladh’s response is emphatic: “It’s all about IT. We want all results to be. life as high as possible. Now, I saw much more than just a handheld medical device; I saw the future living room, agreeing that her life ought to be just a mobile handset that has just done its duty out in the field. I think back to my own visit to the elderly patient, how we sat relaxed together in her living room, agreeing that her life ought to be as good as possible. Now, I saw much more than just a handheld medical device; I saw the future of laboratory medicine. A lab test right there, on a coffee table.

Inspiring colleagues

The Ängelholm team is also inspiring others. A similar system is to be implemented throughout the whole of southern Sweden. Other regions are moving in the same direction. Internationally, this is a hot topic. There’s no turning back: Home care is essential. “Otherwise, we’ll have to build more hospitals,” says Bladh, adding with a smile: “Or install bunk beds, with one patient on top of the other!” As my time with Marie Bladh comes to an end, the door opens. A team dressed in red jackets is just returning from their mission. The cold winter air fills the corridor as they unload their bags. I ask Johan Anderberg, MD, for a brief interview. He declines politely – there’s a lot of work to be done. But he does hold up a mobile handset that has just done its duty out in the field. I think back to my own visit to the elderly patient, how we sat relaxed together in her living room, agreeing that her life ought to be as good as possible. Now, I saw much more than just a handheld medical device; I saw the future of laboratory medicine. A lab test right there, on a coffee table.

Pioneers in home-based healthcare

The mobile care team in Ängelholm are pioneers in this new field of medicine. This is not just a matter of traditional home visits. This is a multi-professional and structured approach to treating some of the most sick and frail patients, the elderly and those with multiple serious conditions, with a multitude of pharmacological treatments. You need to have at least four serious conditions and six drugs to be admitted to their care. The clinical outcomes are excellent. The emergency admission rate for the patients under the team’s care has gone down by more than 90 percent.