Hospital in New Jersey uses two-way texting to successfully engage with 70% of emergency department (ED) patients after they left the facility, saving hundreds of hours of staff call time.

THE PROBLEM:

Hackensack Meridian Mountainside Medical Center (MMC) in Montclair, N.J., found that its staff was spending significant time making follow-up phone calls to ED discharged patients. Many of these calls resulted in leaving voicemails and not actually connecting with patients.

THE SOLUTION:

In 2020, MMC deployed two-way texting with Dialog Health to more reliably and efficiently reach patients following discharge. Texting allowed MMC to not only identify which patients needed further engagement, but the type of further engagement they were seeking:

- Requesting a call from a nurse
- Questions about a bill
- Scheduling a primary care appointment
- Trouble accessing the patient portal

MMC also used text messaging to remind patients to follow discharge and medication instructions, as well as guide them to log in to their patient portal for additional information.

EXAMPLE OF TEXTS SENT:

> **Mountainside Medical Center:** If you have any clinical questions about your medication or recovery instructions and would like to speak to a nurse, reply 1. If you have questions about a bill, reply 2. If you need help setting up a PCP appointment, reply 3. If you need help accessing the patient portal, reply 4.

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> **Mountainside Medical Center:** Thank you for your reply. A nurse will be contacting you within 24–48 hours.

THE RESULTS:

In 2020, MMC discharged 22,863 patients. Of these, 70% (or 16,045 patients) received the ED discharge text (the remaining patients could not be texted). The Dialog Health platform allowed MMC's ED to achieve the following results:

- 22,863 patients were discharged
- 16,045 patients received the ED discharge text (70%)
- 6,818 patients could not be texted (30%)
- 15,310 patients did not require a follow-up call (95.4%)
- Only 74 patients opted out (0.004%)
- 735 patients replied to the text (4.6%) and requested follow-up assistance:
  - 336 patients requested a call from the nurse
  - 75 patients had a billing question
  - 119 patients had a patient portal request
  - 70 patients requested help with another matter

The ED staff only needed to call 7,154 (31%) discharged patients: 6,818 not reached via text and 336 who requested a call via text. That left 15,709 patients who did not require a follow-up call. Assuming an average call takes 2 minutes…

523 staff hours were saved through ED discharge texts in 2020 (1.43 hours/day)

THE CONCLUSION:

Dialog Health's two-way mobile messaging platform has proven to be an efficient, fast, and cost-effective way to identify which patients need a follow-up call from ED staff at MMC. It has also served as an effective way to direct patients to the hospital's patient portal.

Learn more about Dialog Health:

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