

# Five Current Trends in Senior Care

» BY JULIE ROSE  
Paladin Life Care

According to results released in early April by HealthStream, there are five current trends worth noting.

## SENIOR POPULATION IS GETTING OLDER

The current percentage of Americans over age 65 is significant. By 2050 one in five older adults will be over the age of 85. This growth, combined with the increase in the average life expectancy, will make homecare more critical for older seniors who want to age in place.

Mobility becomes more of an issue for seniors as they age. Telehealth services and mail-order pharmacies may play a larger role in healthcare for seniors. Cardiovascular disease, vision and hearing loss, lower levels of mobility and dementia are more likely and more pronounced in seniors over the age of 85. Healthcare strategies will need to provide for these challenges.

## INCREASED NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND USE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

While older adults may be less proficient with some types of technology, it will play an increasing role in their healthcare. Telehealth became an important solution during the pandemic as healthcare organizations and providers



Julie Rose

sought to find safe ways to connect with patients.

It has continued to grow in popularity as providers, patients and insurers embrace this technology. In the future, this option may be even more attractive to seniors with mobility or transportation issues.

Wearable devices, such as Fitbits and smart watches, tend to be less accepted among the older population, but could provide valuable insight into health and fitness when they are used.

Smart detection devices that can indicate when a senior has fallen, encountered other hazards, or needs assistance, motion-activated lighting and digital pill dispensers can also help ensure health and safety for seniors, particularly for

those who have decided to age in place.

## ONE IN FOUR OLDER AMERICANS HAVE EXPERIENCED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

During the pandemic, seniors (like those in other demographics) reported mental health issues such as depression, anxiety or substance abuse.

Healthcare providers will need to be diligent about watching for signs and symptoms of mental health issues in older patients. Integrating behavioral health and primary care is becoming increasingly more important.

## HOSPITAL-AT-HOME IS GAINING TRACTION

The pandemic delayed some healthcare trends and accelerated others. Hospital-at-home was one of the trends that was accelerated. This allows some patients who need acute care to receive that care at home. While the concept appears to be leading edge, it has been in development by the Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Public Health since 1995.

Patients are carefully evaluated to ensure that they meet the validated criteria to be safely and effectively cared for at home. The patient is then evaluated by a physician daily and receives a visit from a physician once per day. Patients also receive extended nursing care for the initial portion of their

hospital-at-home stay and then daily and sometimes more frequent visits as needed.

Diagnostic and therapeutic procedures are performed at home unless that is not possible and then the patient is transferred back to the hospital. This care model is very attractive to seniors who prefer to be cared for in their own homes and want to avoid risks associated with transportation and hospitalization.

## DECLINE IN THE NUMBER OF FAMILY CAREGIVERS CONTINUES

Caring for seniors at home by family members is becoming less of an option. As the number of people over the age of 80 is expected to increase by 79% by 2030, when the first of the baby boomers reach that age, the number of adults between ages 45 and 64 will increase by just 1%.

The good news is those reaching 80 are doing so in substantially better health than their predecessors, but the likely increase in demand for senior care services could result in higher costs for those who need it or difficulty obtaining services.

Julie Rose is CEO of Paladin Life Care. You can reach her at Julie.Rose@Paladin-LifeCare.com or (703) 879-6992, ext. 102. Based in Arlington, Paladin Life Care provides a full scope of services to seniors and those with disabilities. Visit [Paladin-LifeCare.com](http://Paladin-LifeCare.com) for more information.



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