



How to Rank #1 with Referring SNFs & Hospitals

By Wendy D'Alessandro

Why are some senior living communities able to grow while others remain concerned about occupancy levels? HINT: Operators that are thriving -- even in competitive markets -- may be leveraging the advantages of a “*virtual care continuum*” behind the scenes.

Hilary Forman, Chief Clinical Strategies Officer at [HealthPRO® Heritage](#) (a Senior Housing Forum Partner), describes this new trend in progressive care delivery:

“Communities that don’t have multiple care levels on campus can still reap the benefits of reciprocal partnerships. As part of a *virtual care continuum*, neighboring hospitals, rehab centers, home health agencies (HHAs), senior living (SL) communities, and outpatient facilities form strategic alliances based on a mutual goal: to coordinate/optimize positive clinical and fiscal outcomes across the care continuum.”

How This Virtual System Works

Case Study

HealthPRO® Heritage's client, "ABC Senior Living," increased and maintained an impressive 95-100% occupancy rate over 6 months in a competitive Northeast market.

This is how they did it.

ABC Senior Living Community invited a regional referral source (XYZ Skilled Nursing) to collaborate on effective care transitions, positive functional outcomes and health literacy to support seniors as they age in place.

ABC SENIOR LIVING	XYZ REHAB CENTER	HOME HEALTH AGENCY
<p><i>Access to Medicare Part B services via HealthPRO® Heritage, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Onsite staff of physical and occupational therapists. ➔ Sophisticated clinical and education programming, wellness/fitness classes & overall rehab support. ➔ Should health-related concerns arise, patient is considered for a SNF stay at XYZ Rehab Center where HealthPRO® Heritage therapists provide care and rehab to help avoid rehospitalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ World-class skilled nursing services are supported by HealthPRO® Heritage oversight/expertise in rehab. ➔ A short-stay patient may benefit from temporary discharge to ABC Senior Living before returning home. ➔ <i>This WIN-WIN arrangement ensures patients are:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seen in a timely manner and given access to the same therapists throughout the care continuum; and 2. Provided with a dedicated team to advocate for their care delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Receives referrals for ABC Senior Living and XYZ Rehab patients. ➔ Home health therapists complete Initial Evaluation and Discharge Summary. ➔ HealthPRO® Heritage therapists provide home health therapy services to all ABC Senior Living and XYZ Rehab patients. ➔ Home health agency and HealthPRO® Heritage maintain daily/weekly contact to proactively manage patients needs/discharge planning.

"By creating a virtual care continuum, we can better manage and care for our residents without having to refer them out to a system where we run the risk of losing track of their care.

"We also reduce "leakage" and maintain "keepage" within our own network; this keeps our units full and gives residents peace of mind knowing that we are able to participate in all levels of their care."

Executive Director, HealthPRO® Heritage Client

Keep in mind: As hospitals continue to be incentivized according to multiple performance measures (e.g.: episodic cost, average length of stay, rehospitalization rates, etc.), skilled nursing and home health providers are on the precipice of a reimbursement system overhaul by CMS [[Patient Driven Payment Model](#)] (PDPM in October 2019) and Patient Driven Grouper Model (PDGM in January 2020)].

These pressures on upstream and downstream providers will continue to reverberate within the SL industry, so forming strategic alliances has never been more important. “If you’re a senior living community operator, this is an opportunity to define your community as the indispensable link within your own regional care continuum,” says Hilary.

Look Downstream . . .

Focus first on partnerships with downstream home care providers. Gather performance data (quality metrics and positive outcomes) and work with them to make any necessary improvements. “But if they’re still not meeting expectations (as evidenced by poor outcome measures), you may need to consider engaging other home care providers,” she says.

Unsure where to start? A comprehensive checklist to guide your discussions with possible preferred HHAs is available [HERE](#) from HealthPRO® Heritage.

. . . Then Look Upstream

Create a strategy that aligns with what’s important to upstream providers within a *virtual care continuum*, including initiatives to:

- Optimize interdisciplinary communication and coordination of care
- Develop advanced competencies to care for more medically complex residents
- Ensure residents receive evidence-based interventions that enhance health and mitigate risk to help them age in place
- Track, manage, and leverage outcomes data

Connecting the Dots

HealthPRO® Heritage serves as the “glue” for cross-functional initiatives and assures continuity of care. This approach is made stronger by fortifying a downstream partnership with home health care agencies with vetted/proven clinical and performance outcomes. Via a “shared services agreement,” therapists under the HealthPRO® Heritage umbrella are contracted to provide home health services. Contact HealthPRO® Heritage directly for help in building your virtual care continuum today: info@healthpro-heritage.com.

The timing is perfect for senior living communities to seek out opportunities to create a *virtual care continuum*. Hospitals and skilled nursing need trusted partners to help them meet specific outcomes. Residents and their loved ones need help coordinating care between care settings.

“Senior living operators can rise to the challenge of being a good partner for hospitals, skilled nursing, and patients alike,” Hilary notes. “Those who are willing to proactively seek out these opportunities will reap solid bottom line rewards themselves by inviting consistent referrals.”

HealthPRO® Heritage

Nationally recognized as one of the largest privately owned consulting and therapy services firms, HealthPRO® Heritage supports a diversified client base that spans the care continuum. Three robust service sectors – Clinical Strategies, Senior Living, and Home Health — compliment the core Therapy Services Division to drive value, enhance revenue, and shape care on multiple levels by leveraging the power of critical marketplace intelligence, a visionary approach to care and sophisticated proprietary tools and resources.



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