



# Meeting the Needs of Value-Based Care Through Staffing Based on Patient Workload

Transitioning from fee-for-service to value-based care



Over the past decade, we have experienced a major shift in the way healthcare is delivered in the United States.<sup>1,2</sup> Value-based care is a delivery model that compensates providers on outcomes — namely the improvement of patient health, reduction of the incidences of chronic disease, and provision of more efficient, cost-effective quality care.<sup>3,4</sup>

This means providers are motivated to deliver high-quality, comprehensive care while reducing overall expenditures.<sup>5</sup> To accomplish these goals, organizations are realizing they must move from care models that emphasize treatment of symptoms to those that focus on prevention of disease.<sup>2</sup> Providers need to leverage information-sharing tools to increase interdisciplinary teamwork and the coordination of patient care across various settings;<sup>6,7</sup> utilize available resources more efficiently while still providing effective care;<sup>8</sup> and find a quantifiable way to measure health outcomes against the cost of delivery.<sup>2</sup>

To achieve these initiatives, the healthcare industry must invest in technology solutions that streamline care delivery and decision-making processes while still making the patient its central focus.<sup>9</sup> The industry needs to take advantage of the various platforms available that enable the tracking of patient care across the entire enterprise and the utilization of prior information collected to make methods more efficient and effective.<sup>7</sup>

This process began with the movement away from traditional paper, film, and CD filing formats and toward electronic health records (EHR) systems. An increase in patient data accessibility as well as improved turnaround times due to reduction of redundant tests and reviews were quickly realized.<sup>7</sup> However, despite these gains, the industry has not taken full advantage of the efficiency improvements these solutions have the potential to offer.<sup>10</sup>

The desired outcomes of value-based care are clear. Providers and administrators understand the industry's movements toward improvement of population health, increased patient satisfaction, and overall cost reduction. Now they need the tools to achieve these goals.<sup>1</sup>

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# Leveraging software solutions to provide a comprehensive representation of care provision

## Providing cost-effective, quality care while maintaining appropriate staffing requirements

UKG Dimensions Workload Manager™ for Healthcare is a patient workload staffing tool offered as part of UKG Dimensions Scheduling™ Extensions for Healthcare. It enables nursing leaders to match the demand for care to their clinical labor supply, considering each patient's level-of-care intensity to quickly determine total workload levels, validate staffing levels, and generate equitable assignments both in the moment and for future shifts.<sup>11</sup>

Not only does Workload Manager record shift-to-shift, patient-to-staff assignments, it also displays care requirements from the perspective of the individual patient, the unit, and up through the entire organization — both in real time as well as for future needs — ensuring high-quality care delivery and the most efficient utilization of available resources.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Workload Manager ensures patients receive the quality care they deserve based on their individual needs by utilizing the organization's workforce in the most cost-effective manner possible while meeting regulatory requirements.<sup>11,12</sup>

UKG Workforce Target Intelligence™ for Healthcare is the second component of the UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions suite of offerings, providing unit and facility leadership with important, shift-based information that can be used to maximize productivity while still efficiently using resources. With this component, users can access information that allows them to review current, future, or partial-shift resource needs based on the unit's budget, productivity targets, and staffing requirements.<sup>13</sup>

This budget-centric staffing assessment tool is available at the unit, department, and facilitywide levels, providing a high-level, comprehensive view of the entire organization, enabling users to see where care needs are and how available resources can be best utilized housewide to provide quality care that is also cost-effective.<sup>13</sup> By consistently matching staff supply with demand-for-care requirements, UKG Dimensions Target Intelligence helps organizations achieve the cost-quality balance that's necessary to succeed in today's value-based healthcare delivery model.<sup>13</sup>

The third component of the UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions for Healthcare is UKG Dimensions Forecast Manager™. This component helps drive more effective staffing by extracting historical census data and using it to determine current and future staffing needs. Through continuous analysis, UKG Dimensions Forecast Manager uncovers unit-specific, shift-level census patterns so users can more accurately predict the resources needed to provide quality patient care.<sup>14</sup>



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## **Integration of healthcare data solutions provides a comprehensive clinical picture**

Since the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act was enacted as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, healthcare institutions have been tasked with initiating measures that utilize health IT in ways that allow for the exchange of electronic health information, resulting in an increase of quality care.<sup>15</sup>

By connecting with a facility's current EHR system, Workload Manager can harness the valuable patient data that is already available from orders, test results, diagnoses, and other clinical documentation to provide end-users with an auto workload value — enabling them to determine patient needs more quickly and with greater accuracy. Care providers are then able to add information regarding patient care needs based on their interactions with the patients, creating a more holistic picture of patient and unit workload.<sup>11</sup>

## **Increased patient and staff satisfaction**

Since the initiation of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program and the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey that links provider payments to improved performance, healthcare institutions have made increasing patient satisfaction a priority.<sup>16</sup> HCAHPS, the satisfaction survey completed by patients following their hospital stay, is based on seven key issues: communication, quiet at night, information about medications, discharge information, cleanliness, responsiveness, and pain management.<sup>17,18</sup> By utilizing all three components of UKG Dimensions Scheduling for Healthcare, users at all levels of the organization — from direct line staff to administrators — can address many if not all of these important patient priorities.<sup>11</sup>

Workload Manager can be used to create balanced, equitable assignments based on patient workload and staffing ratios. This means care providers have the time they need to spend with patients throughout the shift. The features found in UKG Dimensions Target Intelligence and UKG Dimensions Forecast Manager help leaders confirm they have the staff they need for expected patient flow and staff workload — in real time, for upcoming shifts, and into the future. All of this helps address survey trigger points in a positive manner, leading to increased satisfaction scores.<sup>11,16</sup>

Healthcare organizations are now realizing that staff satisfaction is just as important as patient satisfaction, as strong employee engagement is constantly linked to overall improvements in patient care and satisfaction. Not only does happier staff mean happier patients, but happier staff also means healthier patients. Studies have shown that higher nurse engagement scores lead to decreased patient mortality and complications.<sup>19</sup>

Studies have shown that the biggest staff satisfier is the assurance of adequate staffing so that clinicians can provide high-level care to their patients in a safe and timely manner.<sup>18</sup> By using the features of UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions, organizations can check to see whether staffing is appropriate, always ensuring that there is the right staff for the right patient at the right time.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

In addition, Workload Manager ensures staff get credit for the care they provide. As patients are assigned throughout a shift, a clinician's workload value — the overall heaviness of their assignments — is visible. This value is based not only on the number of patients being cared for but by the workload required for each patient as well. All patients cared for during a shift, regardless of the length of time a clinician cared for them, are recorded, thereby documenting the story of their shift and all care provided.<sup>11</sup>

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## **Streamlined documentation provides valuable data for analysis and sharing**

With the inception of value-based care, the accurate and comprehensive documentation of healthcare information is more important than ever.<sup>20-22</sup> The reporting and recording capabilities of UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions enable users to leverage current data repositories automatically, document information efficiently, and view records for easy analysis.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions is able to include information from established software solutions for electronic medical records; patient placement; staffing and scheduling; human resources (HR); and admissions, discharges, and transfers (ADT), giving users a holistic view of current and future needs from the individual unit and patient to the entire organization. End-users can then add additional information directly into the system through various intuitive tools and features.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

All this valuable data is stored in various reports that are available within the system. Users can run these reports for specific periods of time and locations for analysis of productivity, staffing, and budget metrics. Documentation of proper staffing ratios, compliance with certain regulatory requirements, and specifics regarding patient demographics also can be assessed. Since these reports are stored electronically within UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions, they also can be easily shared across the entire healthcare continuum.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

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## Conclusion

With the advent of value-based care, there is a need for tools with the ability to connect seamlessly with other systems and to allow the electronic documentation, analysis, and sharing of data that demonstrates adherence to regulatory standards and shows that the most cost-effective, quality care is being provided.<sup>9,23</sup> Here are the ways UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions for Healthcare enables organizations to demonstrate compliance with the latest healthcare directives:<sup>11,13,14</sup>

**Adherence to regulatory requirements** There are several features within UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions for Healthcare that allow users to view in real time and confirm from a historical perspective that their organization follows prescribed industry standards such as patient-care ratios and staffing to the overall workload of patients rather than census alone. In addition, various tools within the solution can be configured to address an organization's specific regulatory needs.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

**Provision of appropriate care.** All three components of UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions can be utilized to demonstrate that appropriate patient care is always offered. Documentation of shift-to-shift assignments in Workload Manager will show that staff received balanced, equitable assignments and patients were cared for by appropriate personnel. UKG Dimensions Target Intelligence can be used at the unit level as well as housewide to review staffing needs and move resources appropriately, while keeping budget and productivity metrics in mind. UKG Dimensions Forecast Manager uses historical volume data from an organization's ADT and patient placement systems to predict staffing needs for future shifts — ensuring ahead of time appropriate staff will be available.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

**Leveraging valuable health information technology from other sources.** UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions for Healthcare is a downstream system that utilizes information that is fed into it by other entities, such as an organization's EHR system, ADT feed, and scheduling system, to help clinicians ensure their patients receive the quality care they require. This practice also decreases redundancy of documentation and enables users to determine patient and unit needs more efficiently.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

**Increased staff and patient satisfaction.** Because of the various tools available in UKG Dimensions Scheduling Extensions that allow users to visualize needs both in the moment and prospectively, patients receive quality care from a clinical staff that has been employed in the most effective and efficient manner possible. This will not only increase patient satisfaction with care delivered, but staff will be happier knowing they are being given equitable assignments that enable them to provide quality care.<sup>11,13,14</sup>

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## About the author



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