

The Power of Outsourced Patient Transfer Services to Speed Care, Strengthen Revenue and Increase Patient Retention and Acquisition

A new study by Eliciting Insights reveals a nearly 3:1 return on investment for organizations that engage Conduit Health Partners to provide transfer services.

Efficient Patient Transfers Improve Care

Approximately 5.5 million [emergency department \(ED\) patients](#) and [inpatients](#) are transferred between hospitals each year. An efficient, reliable patient transfer process is a critical aspect of optimal care delivery and operations. When intra-facility movement within a large health system is optimized, there are impactful advantages, such as:

- Patients are more likely to receive appropriate care in a timely manner.
- Streamlined processes improve access and operational efficiency for the health system.
- Patients are more likely to receive coordinated care within the health system.
- Hospital staff face fewer stressors that can reduce errors or omissions in care delivery.

Unfortunately, recent data suggests the time it takes to complete a patient transfer is on the rise, undeniably leading to an increase in negative patient outcomes. One recent [study](#) focused on stroke care and highlighted the complexities of transferring stroke patients to appropriate care settings. This study pointed to significant barriers to the timely transfer of stroke patients. With a fast response being outcome-determinative, successful stroke patient transfer programs require rapid cross-system collaboration and streamlined administrative management. Additional [research](#) points to unacceptable and life-threatening delays in transferring ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) patients, stressing the criticality of a rapid and reliable intra-health transfer system.

Nurse-led: Conduit's Unique Transfer Service Model

Conduit has proven that an essential component of an effective transfer center is leveraging a nurse-led approach based on the referrals recommended by the treating provider. When experienced nurses are coordinating the transfers, they bring expertise and the ability to speak the same clinical language as other health care providers, serving as a vital link between the health system and transferring facilities. This ensures that every patient is directed to the most appropriate level of care at the right time.

In cases where a health system cannot provide the required care, an effective transfer program leverages the local facilities and resources to ensure patients receive the care they need.

Equally important is transfer center decision-making that is backed by data. Equipped with the right information, Conduit's transfer center nurses manage patient throughput to avoid delays in the delivery of care. For example, Conduit's analytics provide transparency throughout the transfer process and arm hospital executives with critical information to make the best decisions around service line development and operational improvement. The *who, what, how, when and why* of transfers becomes clear, helping leaders drive organizational success.



A Growing Body of Evidence

Ongoing research around patient transfers points to the negative impact of delayed or subpar transfer processes and the need for better solutions.

- A 2024 *Research and Theory for Nursing Practice* [study](#) suggests that health care workers, particularly those in rural areas, lack adequate infrastructure and financial resources to achieve positive interfacility patient transfer outcomes.
- A 2023 *JAMA* [study](#) found that inter-hospital transfer of acute stroke patients in the U.S. was longer than current best-practice recommendations.
- A 2023 [study](#) published in *Stroke: Vascular and Interventional Neurology* found significant barriers to timely transfer of stroke patients and the need for better collaboration and administrative management.
- A 2022 *Journal of the American Heart Association* [study](#) points to unacceptable and life-threatening delays in transferring ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) patients.
- Transfer center nurses cite numerous provider communication challenges to optimal transfer of emergency general surgery patients in a 2022 *Journal of Patient Safety* [study](#).

Notably, inpatients at safety-net hospitals [may wait days for a transfer to a hospital that can provide specialized treatment](#). Even more concerning, patients facing a behavioral health crisis that present to the ED [can wait weeks for a psychiatric care facility](#) to receive them, and the resulting travel can be extremely challenging to coordinate, further tying up hospital resources.

A perfect storm of converging issues is creating an unacceptable patient transfer scenario in U.S. hospitals. Ongoing staffing shortages and turnover result in resource challenges, which in turn contribute to burnout for the remaining staff resulting in a perpetual cycle. The American Hospital Association projects a [health care worker shortage of 3.2 million by 2026](#), with nursing facing some of the most critical shortfalls.

Consider what can happen when multiple patients needing a critical care or intervention present to an ED in a small rural community on the same night. This places significant strains on limited nursing staff, who must navigate outreach to on-call physicians and the burdensome process of finding a placement in the closest hospital, which may be several hours away. Pressures on staff to meet these patients' needs may last for hours or days, delaying care and exacerbating the patient's condition. In addition

to care outcomes, inconsistent, inefficient transfer processes open the door for uncoordinated care and directly impact patient safety and experience. When processes are disjointed or lack standardization, staff may take the easiest path possible to complete a patient transfer which may result in a placement with an out-of-network competitor.

On average, it takes nurses 42 minutes to manage patient transfers, equating to 11.3 full-time nurses each month.

– *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 2020-2021*

The good news: A recent analysis reveals that outsourced transfer services—like those offered through Conduit—hold strong potential to make a positive difference and deliver significant financial impact. For hospitals, outsourced transfer services can lead to a nearly 3:1 return on investment.

For one health system, Conduit Health Partners coordinated more than 33,000 transfers in one year alone, ensuring quality care in a timely manner and optimizing revenue growth. “The results that Conduit has delivered to our health system are spectacular,” the chief executive officer said. “We reached so many people over the past year, which wouldn’t have been possible without having them as a partner.”



Health Systems Realize 3:1 ROI With Conduit Health Partners

In 2024, Conduit Health Partners engaged the services of third-party research firm, Eliciting Insights, to conduct an analysis of Conduit's transfer center services provided to a large health system. The analysis looks at the retention of patients within health systems receiving patients using data on patients transferred in 2023, excluding behavioral health. The value of the retention of patients calculation uses the net revenue per account, profit margin by service line and service fee for the transfer center to calculate the benefit to the receiving facility.

Incremental revenue due to new patients uses the annual value of a new patient of \$1,395 and assumes expected patient tenure with the health system is 10 years based on an accepted [industry benchmark](#).

The results revealed significant retention of patients related to outsourced patient transfer services:

- Conduit's transfer center effectively coordinated 18,000 transfers within the large health system over 12 months, ensuring continued coordination of care for patients in addition to providing \$279M in net revenue.
- Conduit's transfer center is predicted to contribute \$23M in future revenue by appropriately enabling a patient to continue on their care journey within the integrated health system.

For key specialties, Conduit's transfer center enabled an ROI of:

7:1 for Cardiology

6:1 for Neurosciences

4:1 for General Surgery

4:1 for Spine and Orthopedics

“Five years ago, [our health system] decided to take an outsourced approach to a transfer center because what we had in place was very fragmented. Coordinating a patient transfer is very complex and frequently can take many calls to find the right fit, which creates a challenge for our emergency departments. We were able to bring in the right talent with Conduit Health Partners' leadership team, which helped us envision what a state-of-the-art contemporary transfer center could be. The results have been spectacular.”

— **Chief Operating Officer** of a large integrated health system

Optimizing Outsourced Transfer Services: Taking a Deeper Look

Hospitals and health systems need support when managing the complexities of the patient transfer process. Most lack in-house resources, operational capacity or expertise to adequately address patient transfer from both the patient care and health system perspective. An optimal approach requires:

- Standardized processes across physicians, clinicians and administrative staff
- Ongoing governance and oversight along with evaluation and reporting
- Dedicated nurse driven resources to facilitate transfer processes, including understanding facility capability, identifying optimal in-network options, communicating with providers and coordinating transportation and care needs.

For these reasons, the business case for outsourcing patient transfer operations is often an easy one to make. It's no surprise that the hospital outsourcing market [is on a trajectory for explosive growth](#) as experts predict more health systems will lean on third-party expertise—especially for services that are “positioned squarely in the nucleus of stress points,” like transfer services.

“Conduit has been a great partner, taking a huge volume of calls off of the frontlines and making sure that they are taking care of those transfers by reaching outside of the regular channels to arrange for transport for patients that we're struggling with.”

— **Chief Clinical Officer** of an integrated health system



Conduit's standardized transfer center model addresses existing stressors by providing a 24/7 operation aimed at speeding patient transfer to the most appropriate care setting possible. Rather than allocating needed resources to make calls and coordinate placement, EDs and inpatient units simply make one call to initiate a transfer. This frees providers, nurses, and other staff to focus on priority activity: serving patients.

The outsourced transfer center model should understand your community and works within a set of network parameters to identify a location based on provider preference and patient need. The transfer team then works to gain acceptance from all stakeholders and coordinates transportation.

The Benefits of an Outsourced Patient Transfer Model:

- Designated transfer resources to improve operational efficiency
- Support in service line development
- Growth in market share through coordinated care and becoming the preferred choice for patient transfers with a streamlined, hassle-free process.
- Data visibility aligned with organization strategy
- Improvement in emergency department throughput, including waiting times and transfer completion
- Network load balancing
- Reduction in transfer delays

About Conduit Health Partners

Conduit Health Partners is a health care solutions company that connects patients and employees to the care they need, when they need it, through customized services in patient transfer, nurse triage, virtual nursing, including hospital at-home and patient outreach. With innovation at the forefront, Conduit is an operational partner that improves care and access for health systems, provider groups, health plans and employers via cost-effective, efficient solutions delivered by more than 200 nurses serving over 200 locations in 47 states. Conduit has improved access to care for more than 1.7 million people since its inception in 2017.

For more information on Conduit Health Partners' Patient Transfer services, visit www.conduithp.com or call (855) 453-0288.