MetroHealth: Champion of a Streamlined Data Network

MetroHealth and Axuall partner to create a digitally-enabled elastic care network

Introduction

As the healthcare industry swiftly adapts to advancements in technology, digitization, and business model evolution, health systems are simultaneously burdened with workforce challenges exacerbated by the onset of COVID-19. Innovation in *workforce intelligence* strategies can help Leading Health Systems (LHS) navigate the fast-paced environment, drive decision-making and maximize revenue opportunities. In addition, workforce intelligence provides relief for over-worked clinicians and staff, which translate to high-quality patient care.

> *Workforce Intelligence* is a comprehensive approach using artificial intelligence-powered solutions and data to drive actionable change by providing insights to complex workforce challenges.

One recent example of successfully leveraging workforce intelligence is The MetroHealth System (MetroHealth), a public, academic medical centered, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. As Cuyahoga County's only safety-net health system, MetroHealth plays an essential role in providing care for all in the region, regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

In a highly competitive market, MetroHealth needed to innovate in both the delivery of care and recruitment of their provider workforce. As a result, the organization sought to find unique solutions to address their provider shortages without relying on traditional recruitment methodologies. To do this, MetroHealth implemented a two-pronged approach with the aim of expanding their clinical workforce.

Fast Facts on MetroHealth

- 600 doctors, 300 advanced practice providers, 1,700 nurses, 7,800 employees
- 29 acute care and 2 community hospitals, 1 Academic Medical Center, Ohio's only adult and pediatric burn center
- 60+ operated entities. Serves more than 300,000 patients, the majority of which are Medicare, Medicaid or uninsured.

Approach 1

Leveraging a Practitioner Data Network and Digital Credentialing Technology to Share Staffing Across Regional Networks

Problem: MetroHealth's workforce challenges were particularly acute in specialized pediatric care. To continue to provide high quality pediatric care amid national and regional provider shortages, the organization brought pediatric specialty providers to its campus from across Ohio's regional network. But MetroHealth quickly found their current provider onboarding and privileging model complex, which resulted in slower onboarding times when providers were critically in need. As a result, MetroHealth sought to redesign their processes to support this new shared staffing solution.

Solution: The MetroHealth System and University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital formed a partnership that brings Rainbow's acute pediatric and specialty services to MetroHealth's main campus. To enable this collaboration, MetroHealth leaders needed coordinated credentialing and onboarding processes that helped enable *workforce elasticity* while maintaining each organization's safety and compliance standards. The goal was to eliminate the tedious process and associated provider burden of filling out the same paperwork multiple times to provide care across health systems—a problem LHS often face when collaborating with health systems to deliver care across a large regional network.

> *Workforce elasticity* refers to the degree of a workforce's extensibility, thus how dynamically adaptable it is in efforts to scale and meet changing business needs and demand trends.

University Hospitals had an existing strategic partnership with Axuall, which allowed them to automatically aggregate and verify credentials, and share it in real-time between providers and organizations. MetroHealth adopted the same technology allowing University Hospital providers to seamlessly share their digital credentials. To help with roll-out, MetroHealth leveraged their physician leaders and Medical Staff Affairs Office (MSO) in the technology selection process and communicated how modernizing the process positively impacts clinical staff.

In using Axuall's data network to support the onboarding and credentialing processes, providers were empowered to control their own career identity and the critical documentation that supports it, including providers' education, training, certifications, licenses, work history, professional references, clinical affiliations, privileges, and liability insurance.

About Axuall

Axuall is a workforce intelligence network that empowers clinicians, health systems, staffing firms, and digital health groups to make better and faster decisions to meet rising patient demand, improve cost and revenue economics, and reduce provider burden and burnout. More information on the Axuall-University Hospital partnership can be found here.

"A great example is our work credentialling pediatric physicians from University Hospitals. Using Axuall's technology we can access a centralized place to share physician credentials across health systems."

– President Elect of Medical Staff, MetroHealth

Approach 2

Fill Critical Provider Shortages by Streamlining Deployment of Locums Across Service Lines

Problem: While the partnership with University Hospitals helped build a larger pool of providers, MetroHealth still had last-minute physician shortages across their acute and community hospitals' service lines. These last-minute vacancies were exacerbated by the time required to complete the credentialing and onboarding process, which traditionally, takes more than 3 months to complete.

As a result, MetroHealth often faced three scenarios: 1) Providers grew inpatient and took a job elsewhere; 2) During the verification process, MSO staff identified red flags within a provider's profile that do not meet MetroHealth's credentialing standards; or 3) The immediate demand no longer needed to be filled due to leakage or waning patient demand.

MetroHealth needed a solution to improve operational efficiencies and quickly present fully credentialed providers in a time of need.

Solution: MetroHealth turned to staffing locum tenens—or temporary providers who can fill last minute shortages. These providers allowed MetroHealth to care for current patient demand and reduce staff burden. As part of this process, MetroHealth needed to ensure temporary providers were qualified to deliver high quality care by undergoing their formal credentialing and privileging processes. Given that temporary providers are often requested last minute, the provider verification and credentialling process needs to be quick, seamless, and free of onboarding delays. This allows MetroHealth to deploy providers to where they are needed most and continue to provide high quality patient care.

With support from Axuall and their ***Practitioner Data Network***, MetroHealth launched an initiative to automate the provider verification and credentialling processes across their physician enterprise, including those with their temporary providers. Through the click of a button, participating physicians are able to share their ***Provider CV and Credential Wallet*** digital wallet of verified information with MetroHealth and expedite the Primary Source Verification (PSV) process – eliminating redundancies and duplicate paperwork.

"One of the problems we have is how do we get people fast (included locum tenens). Being able to have someone give us access to their digital wallet helps improve the process dramatically. The advantages have anticipated to save us time."

– Director of Professional Affairs, MetroHealth

Practitioner Data Network is a a real-time, continuously updated provider information network that connects healthcare organizations and CVOs to over 6,800 primary source verifiers (PSVs), data partners, and practitioners. Designed to be fault-tolerant, highly auditable, tamperproof, and standards-compliant (e.g., NCQA and Joint Commission), the Axuall Network serves as the connective nerve system to the provider data.

Provider CV and Credential Wallet is a branded online and mobile experience for a healthcare organizations' employed and contracted providers that dramatically reduces friction, time, and costs while creating an engaging model for ongoing secure communication. The wallet can support all communication and data exchange between you and your providers. Its world-class UX, highly configurable pre-filled forms engine, and workflow management capabilities meet all the demands of security and portability.

Results: Practitioner Data Network Fills Critical Provider Shortages and Improves the Onboarding Experience

Axuall's Practitioner Data Network, which enables real-time data verification and streamlines the cumbersome and time-consuming process of provider credentialing was critical to MetroHealth's success. Axuall's expansive information network and national partnerships with physician staffing agencies helped efficiently hire and deploy providers across MetroHealth.

This data network, in collaboration with University Hospitals, allowed MetroHealth to seamlessly onboard pediatric specialists and helped deliver crucial care to their patients. Beyond patient care, Axuall's partnership improved the provider experience by transforming the onboarding, credentialing, privileging and enrollment processes from cumbersome to streamlined.

MetroHealth plans to continue integrating Axuall's Practitioner Data Network and associated technology into their Medical Staff Office (MSO) procedures to rapidly onboard locums across additional service lines. As part of their integration plan, MetroHealth now requires the use of Axuall's Practitioner Data Network for all locum and externally staffed providers who provision care under the MetroHealth umbrella. They are looking to incorporate new functionalities into the technology, including provider reference verification and bi-annual re-credentialing, and standardize the use of Axuall's network to increase operational efficiencies and support high quality care delivery.

"In the past we've used locum companies and Axuall's technology makes it easier for medical staff affairs to credential locums quickly. We're looking forward to developing new functionalities to strengthen our locum onboarding infrastructure.

–Past President of Medical Staff

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About Axuall

Formed in 2018, Axuall, Inc. addresses the national imperative to improve access to quality healthcare by helping to eliminate unnecessary inefficiencies in workforce deployment. Axuall is a national identity and credential network that enables clinicians, healthcare systems, and primary source institutions to share and manage authenticated credentials in real-time. With this, Axuall addresses the information problem at the center of workforce readiness, empowering health systems to accelerate the time-to-deployment of qualified healthcare professionals, while at the same time reducing physician burnout. With over 10 million healthcare workers in the United States, the need to efficiently and accurately account for qualifying credentials is paramount to meeting market demand and safety.

For more information, please visit https://www.axuall.com/

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