Owl

How Owl Helps Ascension Improve Behavioral Health Services

+ △ **Ascension**

One of the largest behavioral health hospitals in the U.S., Ascension Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health provides evidence-based mental health care to all ages across the Chicago and greater-Chicago area. Ascension Illinois offers a robust service line that includes 550 inpatient beds, three residential treatment programs, and a host of outpatient services across 48 different locations.

Using Owl, Ascension Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health leverages a comprehensive measurement-based care strategy to improve clinical outcomes and business performance.

The Problem

Ascension Illinois's journey to measurement-based care started with a simple question: "Do our patients get better?"

The Ascension Illinois team set out to develop a comprehensive clinical outcomes system to track patient outcomes to answer this age-old behavioral health question. Using validated measures, the health team started to track patient-reported outcomes. They used paper forms, intelligent scanning programs to import the forms, and simple databases to manage the data.

When paper forms became too difficult and cumbersome, the team transferred to digital measures. Eventually, they moved to a more stable system using SQL servers and more sophisticated programming.

While this was a worthy start, the extensive volume of patients who engage in Ascension's behavioral health services made it extremely difficult to maintain the homegrown system and processes to manage the incoming data.

"After delivering and gathering outcomes, the clinicians were hungry for more. They started to see the power of measurement-based care and were eager to expand," said Jason Washburn, P.h.D., ABPP, and clinical consultant to Ascension Illinois's measurement-based care strategy.

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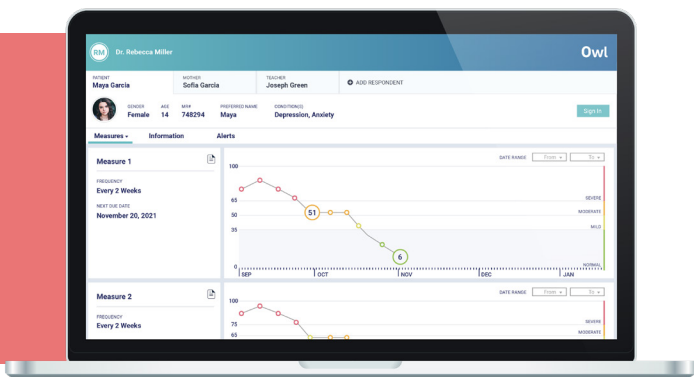www.owl.health

The Solution

The Ascension Illinois team realized that while you can use the best measures available, finding a process that is user-friendly for both clinicians and patients and scalable for a large health system was incredibly difficult.

"One of the things we learned as we tried to scale outcomes measurement across our different domains were the challenges our clinicians faced from the clunkiness of our homegrown system," said Chris Novak, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Ascension Illinois's Behavioral Medicine Service Line. "The clinicians valued the input, and it became clear that measurement-based care was the core of what we wanted to do. We needed a more scalable, consistent, and effective mechanism to do that."

The Ascension Illinois team explored several different options in selecting a measurement-based care platform. The team chose Owl because of its ease of use for clinicians and patients, the automation of the complete process that makes measurement-based care efficient and burden-free for staff, and the extensive database of validated measures.

"We were drawn to Owl due to the range of capabilities and the automation it brings to measurement-based care. We also needed a tool that would support a broad range of specialty programs," said Novak. "Other products on the market are more 'one-size-fits-all.' What was also attractive about Owl is the extensive database of measures to support all different kinds of behavioral health conditions and programs."

"We were able to create something that made sense from what started as a simple question [Do our patients get better?], but full implementation of measurement-based care didn't happen until we started to partner with Owl," said Washburn.
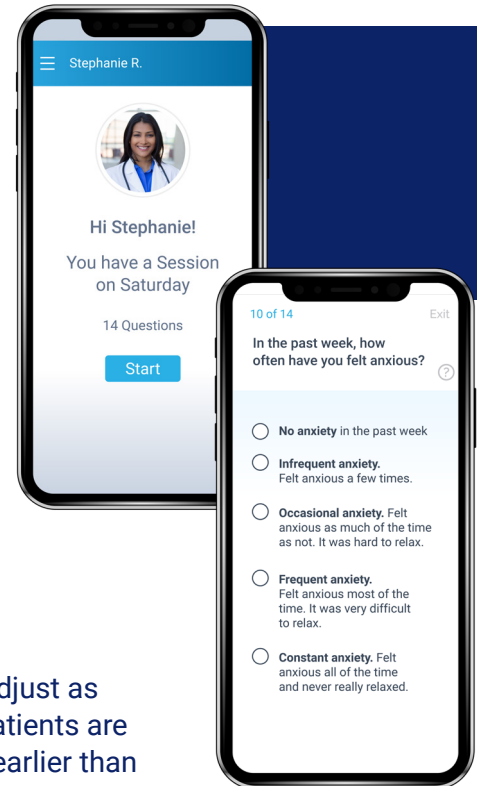

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The Results

By using Owl, Ascension Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health has improved its clinical outcomes and business performance substantially. Novak described the five ways Owl positively impacts behavioral health services at Ascension:

1 With Owl, we continually assess the patient's symptoms, the severity of those symptoms, the impact on their daily living, and ultimately their overall quality of life. This truly allows us to customize and personalize our treatment to each and every patient. We have this level of understanding of the patient throughout the course of treatment. We start with Owl assessments at the time of admission or initiation into treatment. We do it again at defined midpoints and at the time of discharge so we can continue to measure the effectiveness of our treatment.

2 We also use the data and the progress graphs in session to demonstrate to the patient that they are making improvements. So often in conditions like depression and anxiety, patients underestimate their own progress. With Owl, we can show them objective measures that illustrate their improvements. It makes a big difference in improving patient outcomes.

3 We're able to observe how a patient is responding to treatment and adjust as necessary. Not only can it indicate when treatment is effective and patients are getting better, but it can also indicate when adjustments are needed earlier than using clinical observations alone.

4 Using Owl for measurement-based care allows us to understand when our patients are ready to transfer to the next level of care based on objective measures.

5 We're able to benchmark our programs with Owl Analytics. This was incredibly important during the pandemic as we transitioned from in-person treatment to a virtual care model. We can look at real-time data to understand and demonstrate that our virtual-based program is as clinically effective as in-person.

"True measurement-based care can show improvements in clinical outcomes," said Washburn. "When clinicians are responding to it, patients are responding to it. That results in improved outcomes."

"For us, measurement-based care with Owl is the vehicle by which we can demonstrate that our programs are providing clinical effectiveness and we have a demonstrable outcome measurement in a defined period of time," said Novak.

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The Future

What's next for Ascension Illinois and Owl? Ascension Illinois will use Owl to help expand access to services for more patients.

"There just aren't enough clinicians to meet the demand," said Novak. "Moving forward, we'll use insights from Owl to show patients that they are ready to transition out of care. We believe having objective data for the clinician to validate with the patient will make the difference to being able to move people on to the next level of care or discharge when they are stable enough to do so."

Ascension Illinois is also planning to extend Owl into more service lines and continue to expand the measurement-based care model across its programs.

About Owl

Owl gives behavioral health organizations better data, better insights, and better outcomes with its data-driven, evidence-based solutions.

Leading organizations, including Main Line Health, Ascension, Inova Health, Polara Health, and Aurora Mental Health Center, rely on Owl to expand access to care, improve clinical outcomes, and prepare for value-based care.

Owl makes measurement-based care easy to engage patients, optimize treatment, improve care, reduce clinician burden, and capture data to optimize business performance. For more information on our transformational behavioral health solutions, visit owl.health.

Ascension

Learn more about Ascension in this on-demand webinar.

Learn more about the benefits of measurement-based care here: What is Measurement-Based Care?

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