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# Using real-time technology to help healthcare leaders tackle pandemic safety in long-term care facilities

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Nursing homes became "ground zero" for COVID-19 when the first wave of the virus arrived in the United States in Spring 2020. Although less than half of 1% of the U.S. population resides in nursing homes, these people account for nearly 40% of all COVID-related deaths. Improved vaccine distribution is helping curb COVID-19 outbreaks, but these immunizations won't protect residents from other illnesses that may arrive in the future.

Basic measures such as mask requirements, social distancing and sanitization practices only address immediate outbreak concerns. They have little impact, however, on long-term risk mitigation strategies designed to combat the spread of aggressive future illnesses and boost employee confidence in safety measures. If staff aren't confident in workplace safety protocols and procedures, they will be less confident in completing their everyday duties, which will have a direct negative effect on resident care.



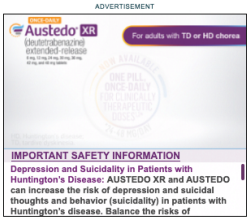
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Fortunately for long-term care facilities, there are new best practices and innovative digital solutions that can help risk managers create a unified strategy that addresses the health and safety of their employees, residents and visitors in a wider dynamic long-

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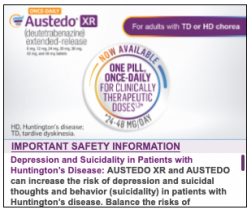
the health and safety of their employees, residents and visitors in a wider dynamic lens.

Here are the top three solutions facilities managers can implement to enhance long-term health and safety risk mitigation:

**Reducing transmission with contract tracing tools**

Although contact tracing can be extremely effective, data shows 75% of people have been falsely quarantined when using only an interview-based contact tracing process. Human-driven methods are time-consuming and costly because they routinely involve tens if not hundreds of phone interviews to trace the virus each time someone is diagnosed positive. The exclusive aim of contact tracing is to inform people whether they've had infection-critical contact with an ill person and, if so, to interrupt that chain of infection.

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One of the most reliable contact tracing devices is an extremely lightweight sensor (15 grams) that uses ultra-wideband technology to pinpoint employees' proximity to one another. Wearables and mobile-connected tools provide more reliable distance and daily health monitoring and enhance data aggregation and analysis to identify trends that will help for future planning when another crisis occurs. This allows risk managers to effectively contact trace when necessary, quickly notify all potentially exposed individuals and act instantaneously to stop the spread.

**Implementing distance monitoring**

Even though health screenings can prevent symptomatic employees from entering the workplace, asymptomatic employees will still inevitably play into the equation. Between 40-50% of people who test positive for COVID-19 have no symptoms. It is imperative to ensure all physical distance compliance measures are followed.

By utilizing a combination of wearable devices for staff and connected devices throughout the facility, management can pinpoint employees' proximity to one another and the duration of interactions. Then, leaders can alert individuals in real-time when they are at increased risk. In the event of an outbreak, these recorded encounters are highly valuable for notifying those who may need to quarantine or be tested.

**Utilizing analytics dashboards**

Daily fluctuations in capacity and foot traffic can be difficult to manage with the population turnover in long-term care facilities. Residents, visitors and staff can sometimes change by the hour. A dashboard that integrates with thermal scanning and contact-tracing wearables can communicate results to managers in real-time to help track wellness-related activity. The dashboard can actively analyze real-time location data and issue notifications, medical guidance and instructions whenever a manager needs it.

Additionally, a centralized command center helps management adhere to and stay updated on state and local regulatory health and safety compliance guidance. Ultimately, the ability to view comprehensive data like this improves leadership's decision-making ability in health and safety-related matters and improves the overall health, confidence, and productivity of facility employees.

**Future-proof your facility**

With the right combination of ultra-wideband technology, digitized contact tracing and an analytics dashboard to inform risk management decisions, long-term care facilities will be poised to protect themselves from any illness outbreak. When combined with increasing immunization efforts, risk managers can make more informed decisions to protect employees' health, build employee confidence and positively impact resident care indefinitely.

*RJ Frasca is vice president of marketing and product of EBI, a leading background screening provider and EBI Workplace Health & Safety, its comprehensive monitoring, tracing, and data insights platform. Frasca brings over 20 years of marketing and product experience with companies such as Yahoo, Microsoft, Time Warner and Verizon.*

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