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A new app helps to save time and improve data accuracy: DOCit

Long-term care organizations are cutting-edge innovators in the development of digital technology to help improve care for their residents and the well-being of their staff.

Kitchener’s Trinity Village is a perfect example. The long-term care home formed a partnership with VitalHub, a health care technology company, to develop a mobile

app used by frontline workers to improve communication, scheduling, documentation, reporting practices, and quality of care. In 2018, their efforts earned them a place on the honour roll of the Ontario Health Minister’s Medal.

The story began back in 2017, when Trinity Village decided to participate in MaRS’s Innovation Partnership Procurement by Co-Design program. They issued a

challenge for tech companies, asking for a digital solution to help nursing staff, personal support workers, and other frontline workers be more efficient and cut through the busy work that can often dominate their day-to-day experience.

More than 10 applicants vied for the innovative opportunity. "We selected Toronto's VitalHub because they were committed to building software from the ground up for what we were trying to achieve," says Trinity Village's Chief Operating Officer, Debby Riepert. "They understood what we wanted and the complex environment in which we operate."



The DOCit app smartphone interface.

The partners envisioned a mobile app that would give their frontline staff access to real-time and up-to-date information through mobile devices. "We wanted to give our staff the ability to have all their relevant information at their fingertips, so they didn't have to go to their desk, the communication book, or other physical sheets every time they needed to know something," says Riepert.

The team took all the information that frontline staff typically need and put it into the new app, called DOCit, so that when staff started their day they knew exactly what they were doing and what was expected of them. The app also helps them keep tabs on situations as they develop.

"If there's a medical condition that needs a closer look, or dementia-related behaviours that are starting to worsen – all that information can be communicated so that everyone is working off the same real-time information," says Riepert. For example, if personal support workers observe something that needs attention, they can send a digital prompt to the nursing staff, and that prompt stays red on the nursing staff's action list in the app until it is dealt with. This is much easier and faster, says Riepert, than trying to track down people by phone or in person.

Trinity and VitalHub consulted with staff to get them on board with using the app and to generate ideas to make it as user-friendly as possible. Trinity Village also spoke with residents and family councils to explain the app and manage expectations.

"The phones don't have SIM cards to connect them to outside networks, so they aren't used for any other purpose than DOCit," explains Riepert. "Even so, we knew some of our residents would wonder why staff were typing away at their devices, so we put posters around the home to say 'This is what you're going to be seeing, this is what staff are doing, and here's what the app looks like.' It was important to keep everyone informed."

An initial pilot program showed very promising outcomes, such as saving personal support workers an average of 23 minutes per shift and registered practical nurses an average of 1.5 hours per shift. Moreover, using the app was shown to improve data accuracy by 30%.

"We saw a lot more efficiency and a significant reduction of errors when it came to entering resident information and keeping track of all the varying schedules," Riepert says. "Using the app always gave us a clearer picture of what was going on within the home and how effective our team was at doing their daily tasks."

The pilot's success encouraged Trinity and VitalHub to make the app available to all long-term care homes. They were awarded a total of \$50,000 from MaRS Procurement by Co-Design which they used towards their efforts.

Feedback from staff has been equally promising. After six weeks of use, the home's staff gave the app a satisfaction rating of nine out of 10.

Other organizations are now showing interest in exploring DOCit for their homes. At the same time, Trinity and VitalHub will be leveraging MaRS's support to enhance DOCit even further, so that staff can track and assess even more information that will enhance care and quality of life for their residents. [LTC](#)



J. Oulton & Associates
Nutrition and Culinary Services Consulting

Registered Dietitians and Food Service Specialists

Contact us for your nutrition and culinary service needs.

Email: jane@joultonandassociates.com
Phone: 905-645-4477 | www.joultonandassociates.com

