



The Future of Healthcare: Four Hospital Trends for 2025

The post-acute care landscape is forever evolving, making it critical for health leaders to stay on top of shifting trends, particularly within the inpatient rehabilitation setting. To optimize hospital operations, improve patient outcomes, and bolster financial sustainability, understanding and adapting hospital priorities has never been more important.

Discover four key trends expected to impact hospitals in 2025 and how health leaders can best position themselves for success with the help of a strategic post-acute partner.

1 Rise in Inpatient Utilization

The American Hospital Association (AHA) forecasts a 3% increase in inpatient utilization over the next decade, reaching 31 million annual discharges. Additionally, within that same period, inpatient days are projected to rise by 9% to 170 million.¹ These trends will significantly impact patient throughput, especially as both younger and older populations grapple with unique health challenges.



Some of these emerging health challenges include:²

- **People ages 18-55 are experiencing a 14% increase in stroke rate**
- **People 45 years and younger are nine times as likely to die from heart failure**
- **The older population continues to experience more chronic and complex diagnoses – therefore increasing the need for access to inpatient treatment**

The demand for healthcare services continues to outpace the supply of qualified professionals, available beds and comprehensive inpatient treatment. To address these challenges, hospitals are partnering with providers who possess the expertise, resources and flexibility to meet evolving patient needs and utilization trends.

2 Medical Costs Hitting 13-Year Peak

With a rise in inpatient utilization comes a rise in overall care costs. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released a report projecting a significant surge in U.S. national healthcare expenditure (NHE). Individual medical costs are projected to reach a 13-year high in 2025, and NHE is projected to surge by 70% to \$7.7 trillion by 2032.³

A PwC Health Research Institute (HRI) report attributes this near-record trend to:

- **Inflationary pressures**
- **Increased utilization across service lines, including inpatient rehab and behavioral health**
- **Rising chronic disease prevalence**
- **Escalating prescription drug spending**

These rising costs are not only impacting a hospital's ability to provide comprehensive care, but are also placing a significant burden on patients, as 25% of adults report skipping or delaying care due to financial constraints.² In 2024, medical care prices rose by 3.3%. This increase is just a small part of the significant spike in care costs since 2000 which has risen by 121% compared to other consumer goods and services, which only rose by 86% over the same period.



To navigate these internal and external pressures, hospitals and health systems are having to turn inward to identify opportunities for cost savings across their business operations. Partnering with a trusted post-acute provider experienced in managing capital to support critical service lines, like inpatient rehabilitation, helps health leaders focus on their core competencies. This in turn enhances internal operations, care delivery and patient outcomes.

3 Behavioral Health Program Expansion

In light of the pandemic, ongoing opioid crisis, and rising substance use disorder rates, integrating behavioral health across various care settings has become essential for improving overall outcomes, and will continue to rise in popularity throughout 2025. A key benefit of mental health integration is the immediate access it provides patients, especially those in more rural communities.

This access is especially critical as many patients seeking behavioral health care often encounter long wait times which can delay the support they need and intensify psychiatric conditions. A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association indicated that over 50% of psychologists reported having no openings for new patients. For those with waitlists, the average wait times extend to three months or longer, with nearly 40% indicating that their waitlists have grown in the past year.⁵

Additionally, hospitals are now challenged with balancing adequate behavioral health coverage with cost management. High demand, reimbursement challenges and behavioral health-specific staffing constraints require innovative solutions to incentivize quality and efficiency.⁴

Partnership with a qualified expert allows hospitals to seamlessly integrate behavioral health while staying focused on the hospital's core acute offerings, providing high quality care and recruiting strong clinical talent.



4 Growth in Post-Acute JV and Contract Management Partnership

Approximately 45% of acute care discharges nationwide are admitted to a post-acute setting. Inpatient rehabilitation in particular will experience substantial growth.⁶

As hospitals get inundated with patient admissions, having a comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation program with the guidance and support of a qualified partner has never been more important.

In fact, hospitals are increasingly opting to partner via joint venture or contract management with a qualified rehabilitation expert to achieve improved outcomes, patient engagement and throughput, and financial performance.⁷ Similarly, co-locating – or the integration of specific service lines under the same hospital roof or campus – continues to see growth, especially for both inpatient rehabilitation and behavioral health programs.^{8,9}



Visit [LifepointRehabilitation.net](https://www.lifepointrehabilitation.net) to learn how a joint venture or contract management partnership with Lifepoint can help your hospital stay ahead of shifting trends while maintaining strong performance and outcomes.

References

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