



HME Hero Profile: Gayle Devin, CEO ActivStyle

Stories of HME leaders who are going the extra mile and making a difference on behalf of the entire HME industry.

A SPECIAL CHALLENGE: INCONTINENCE PROVIDERS

The incontinence industry has always had its unique challenges given the fact that Medicare does not cover incontinence supplies. Many incontinence patients are Medicaid or Dual Eligible beneficiaries with limited resources and access to care. And as more states choose to transition the day-to-day management of their Medicaid programs to Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in an attempt to better manage the growing costs, incontinence providers are facing a new wave of reimbursement pressure.

“At ActivStyle, we primarily serve the Medicaid population, which is increasingly being outsourced to MCOs,” said Gayle Devin, CEO of ActivStyle. “We are seeing a compression of reimbursement rates, particularly among larger MCOs who don’t understand that there are thousands of types of protective underwear and incontinence supplies under each HCPCS code. They are just looking for ways to save money, and they don’t realize the negative impact low-quality products can have on patients.”

According to a September 2018 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation, about 50% of the nearly 50 million Americans on Medicaid are covered by the 280+ comprehensive Medicaid MCOs that exist in the United States today. The emergence

AAHOMECARE
HME HEROES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

COMPANY SNAPSHOT:

- **COMPANY:** ActivStyle
- **HQ:** Minneapolis, MN
- **LOCATIONS:** National provider covering 43 states + D.C. for Medicaid and 47 States + D.C. for Medicare
- **PRIMARY PRODUCT FOCUS:** Incontinence Supplies
- **CEO:** Gayle Devin

of new MCOs who have negotiated capitated rates with states are looking for creative ways to save money, and unfortunately, many are trying to find those savings in HME products like incontinence supplies.

According to Devin, “Health plans are not connecting the dots to look at patient outcomes and product quality. They believe a diaper is a diaper. At ActivStyle, we pride ourselves on only offering products that meet the National Association

for Continence (NAFC) Quality Performance Standards. We also offer care services, like monthly check-ins with patients to determine if their weight, lifestyle, or needs have changed.”

“By making sure patients have the right products and services, we are able to reduce the risk of complications and reduce utilization rates, which ultimately end up saving health plans significantly and leads to better patient outcomes.”

– Gayle Devin, CEO of ActivStyle

One of the biggest challenges incontinence providers face when demonstrating the financial savings they can create for health plans is directly tied to the way Medicare and Medicaid handle the claims for Dual Eligible patients. With incontinence patients, Medicaid pays for the supplies, but Medicare pays for the treatment of medical complications that occur as a result of low-quality or poor-fitting supplies and improper patient care. As a result, Medicaid does not see the millions of Medicare dollars that are wasted every year on complications that could’ve been avoided by spending a few extra dollars on high quality products and care services.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Gayle Devin is a career-long, passionate industry advocate for the incontinence patient. She works tirelessly to educate patients, providers, payers, and industry influencers on the importance of properly treating and caring for people with incontinence needs. Along with her many responsibilities that come with being the CEO of ActivStyle, she is an active member of the MAMES legislative committee, a board member of the Great Lakes Home Medical Services Association, and is the Chairperson for AAHomecare’s Medical Supplies Council and its Incontinence Quality Standards Work Group.

“Even though most people don’t think of incontinence the same way they think of life-supporting supplies like oxygen, access to proper incontinence supplies and care services is just as critical to the millions of people who are living with incontinence issues every day. If not managed properly, expensive complications occur, which ultimately end up costing the healthcare system more and negatively impacting the patient’s quality of life. We want to give patients back their dignity so they can lead an active lifestyle,”

– Gayle Devin, CEO of ActivStyle

The Work Group is focused on educating payers, MCOs, and industry influencers on the many benefits associated with making sure incontinence patients have access to the right products at the right time in order to achieve the highest possible outcomes while also ensuring sustainable rates and reducing care costs. Devin and the Work Group members are:

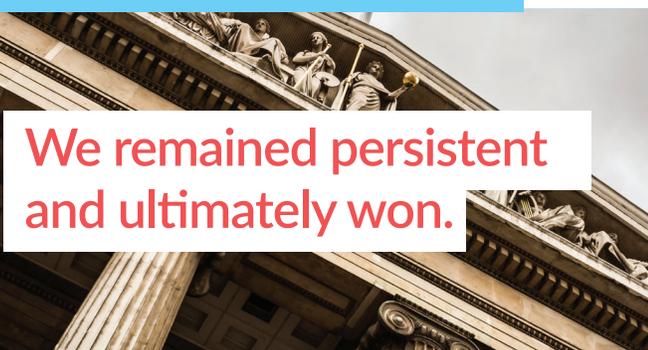
1. Actively soliciting payers who are willing to share their utilization and outcomes data to facilitate the Group’s analysis of outcomes and expenses for states with and without quality standards in place.
2. Developing a white paper on supplier best practices and why quality products help achieve these goals that can be used by all members when negotiating with payers.
3. Battling state tax rules in several states where incontinence supplies have been categorized as clothing and are therefore subject to sales tax, further impacting HME provider margins.

PROTECTING PATIENT ACCESS

Recent state-level policy wins show how effective the HME provider community can be when passionate, patient-centric people like Gayle Devin come together. Devin played a leadership role in a two-year battle with the state of Minnesota to prevent a sole-source program for incontinence supplies from being implemented. The program would have required all providers to use one distributor to obtain products from and be reimbursed at cost plus 20%, which would've resulted in providers losing an average of \$38 per patient per month. No provider can stay in business under these financial conditions, and the nearly 40,000 residents with incontinence needs in Minnesota would have suffered.

Devin worked with the Midwest Association for Medical Equipment Services & Supplies (<https://www.mames.com>) and other HME leaders in Minnesota to file a lawsuit against the state and got a temporary restraining order while they presented their case. After thousands of dollars and countless hours of extra work meeting with state officials and influencers, Devin and the team prevailed. The program was repealed.

STRONG ADVOCACY EFFORTS



While ActivStyle shouldered the majority of the financial burden for the lawsuit and provided testimony to the Senate Health and Finance committee on behalf of Minnesota providers on multiple occasions, Devin was encouraged by the level of engagement she saw among AAHomecare and MAMES

members, advocacy groups, and providers — all working together to make state legislators and influencers aware of the negative impact the program would have on the state's citizens and economy.

This approach ultimately saves the MCO money through lower utilization rates, as a result of using products that have higher absorbency, good re-wet rates that wick away moisture from the skin to reduce the number of times they must be changed, lessening the risk of infection or wounds.

“There is power in numbers. We had great participation by a number of providers in the Minnesota case. It showed how we really can make a difference if everyone gets involved and stays involved.”

– Gayle Devin, CEO of ActivStyle

“Even after we lost our first attempt in getting our bill passed to repeal the MN Preferred Provider Program due to a veto by former Governor Dayton, we remained persistent and ultimately won. In today's world, it is no longer an option to sit back and expect someone else to do the advocacy work for you. We all have to stand up together and stop this wave we are seeing, whether it is sole sourcing or fee reductions,” said Devin.

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Today, ActivStyle is able to demonstrate to payers that by supplying high quality products at reasonable reimbursement rates, her team is able to partner with their patients to proactively manage their health challenges. This approach ultimately saves the MCO money through lower utilization rates; thanks to products that have higher absorbency, good re-wet rates, do not need to be changed each time, and wick away moisture from the skin to reduce the risk of infection or wounds.

But capturing and presenting that quantifiable value to health plans is not easy. Devin and her team are constantly educating health plan leaders about both the cost savings and patient-outcome advantages that can be realized if patients have access to the right products and care services.

Devin employs several different approaches to identify potential cost savings and improved patient outcomes. In many states, the Freedom of Information Act provides access to patient utilization information by HCPC. She uses this information to show how her organization ranks compared to other providers who often simply ship out products monthly without ensuring the patient's condition is being managed properly. In some cases, she has found that the health plan itself is willing to share its utilization data in anticipation of documenting potential cost savings.

A NEW GENERATION OF ACTIVISM

While the ActivStyle team is constantly reaching out to their partners to ensure they are educated and aware of the need to reimburse for quality incontinence supplies at sustainable rates, timing is everything. In some cases, they are having these conversations after a rate reduction has been announced. It is a constant battle, but it is one that this AAHomecare HME Hero is not giving up.

Devin is encouraging all HME providers to become actively engaged in organizations like AAHomecare and their state associations to promote the positive role their products and services play in reducing healthcare costs and improving patients' lives.

According to Devin, the growing payer relations team at AAHomecare is playing a critical role in the industry's ability to stay on top of the rapidly emerging issues. She stated, "There is so much going on in every state, and we cannot be everywhere. It's difficult to know what is in the pipeline. Laura Williard and now David Chandler are not only helping to be our eyes and ears of what the MCOs are doing, but they are also battling in the trenches with us as we fight every day to turn the tides."

To join more HME Heroes like Gayle Devin, become a member of AAHomecare today and play an active role in the AAHomecare councils like the Medical Supplies Council.

JOIN AAHOMECARE TODAY

to collaborate with other like-minded HME providers and industry innovators who are leading the HME industry into the next decade of opportunity.

www.aahomecare.org/become-a-member