

Hospice Analytics Partners with Selected, Provides Vital Data

Selected has announced the addition of Hospice Analytics, Inc. to its growing list of Consultant & Vendor Benefit Providers. *The Bulletin* spoke with Cordt T. Kassner, PhD, principal in the company, to learn more about Selected's new partner.

What is the mission of Hospice Analytics?

"Hospice Analytics is an information sharing research organization whose mission is to improve hospice utilization and access to quality end-of-life care through analysis of Medicare and other national datasets.

Examples of how our mission is accomplished include our National Hospice Locator, a free, online tool at hospiceanalytics.com that provides maps and information about every known hospice in the United States.

We also offer several types of reports, including our Hospice Market Reports that contain comprehensive analysis of Medicare claims files; our Exposure Risk Reports that help avoid waste, fraud, and abuse; and our Funeral Home Reports that analyze Medicare claims files, specifically focused on mortality."



Cordt Kassner

What makes your services unique?

"Hospice Analytics is the only company in the country studying Medicare data—including hospice, hospital, skilled nursing facility and home health agency claims files—with the goal of strengthening hospice and end-of-life care services. We believe it is imperative to understand how hospice 'fits' into the broader healthcare system, from initial diagnosis through eventual death. As part of our broader mission, we now include outreach to quality funeral home providers such as members of Selected Independent Funeral Homes.

"We have worked with several hospices for over five consecutive years, providing detailed analysis of their market share, which people receive hospice and, importantly, which people don't receive hospice. This information has helped hospices strengthen their position locally, determine when and where to expand services and where to avoid expansion.

"Hospice Analytics also has formalized relationships in place with nearly all state hospice organizations. We provide research services, state reports and technical

"Among my top areas for Horan & McConaty's marketing focus is hospice outreach. Data from Hospice Analytics, and one more question we ask on all first calls, has enabled me to determine if we are 'moving the needle' with our hospice outreach efforts.

"During an Annual Meeting Study Session, Cordt Kassner will review his offerings for gathering data on hospices in a market area, and I will review how I track and trend the success of my company's efforts, to earn the confidence of our local hospice organizations. I intend to help members stop 'shooting in the dark' in hopes that their time and resources devoted to the cultivation of hospice relationships are truly fruitful."

—John J. Horan

Horan & McConaty Funeral Service/Cremation
Aurora, CO

support for state hospice organizations which impact the local, state and national levels."

What is the nature of your partnership with Selected?

"Working with Past President John Horan and the Selected Headquarters staff, Hospice Analytics developed the useful Funeral Home Reports I mentioned previously. These reports focus on mortality across Medicare beneficiaries, and they detail hospice, hospital, skilled nursing facility and home health agency providers, using the most up-to-date Medicare information available (currently 2010).

"For example, Medicare beneficiaries account for 80 percent of total deaths nationally; 41 percent of Medicare deaths occur in hospices, 20 percent in hospitals, 5 percent in skilled nursing facilities, 2 percent in home health agencies, and 31 percent outside of these providers. Funeral Home Reports break this information down by county across local providers, offering a 'road map' of mortality to assist in prioritizing outreach to community providers. An example report is posted online at hospiceanalytics.com/hospice-care-products-and-services.

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know what to apply for, and things are getting bogged down. What if that went away? We already have the model of Colorado sunseting its licensing laws, and it's doing fine."

Does it have to be one way or the other?

"Ultimately, yes. We have to make the choice, or we will continue the way we've been—a little of both. We need clarity, so that when specific issues arise, we can address them effectively and with a unified voice, based on the direction we have decided to take."

What will the main challenges be?

"On one hand, if we move toward professionalization, a degree path must be established, and educational requirements increased. That means improving content, not just the amount of course work. Mortuary schools will have to adapt. And we'll have to decide what we can do for the people who don't have a baccalaureate degree. There surely will be resistance from people who don't want or think they need one.

"Back in the 1960s, the private schools successfully fought to kill a proposal by the American Board of Funeral Service Education

to require one year of general, college-level education prior to mortuary school. It was a ten-year battle that laid the groundwork for the tension that still exists today between the private and public schools. As an educator, I see how successful people are who come to mortuary school with previous college experience, but instituting this as a requirement will likely get push-back even today.

"Also, all states would have to become consistent in their licensing requirements. And high-level continuing education would be required across the country.

"On the other hand, if we decide on the path of commercial enterprise, I can assure you that competition will increase and retail prices will drop. We'd also see mergers and acquisitions on a scale like never before. There would still be the need for schools, but we'd have to work state-by-state to sunset laws and school-by-school to redevelop curricula.

How do you plan to proceed?

"I spoke to the Council of Funeral Association Executives in January, and it was clear to them that this must be taken out to the people. We need to hear all the voices; it's not something one group can decide. So, I want to create a series of regional roundtables at

maybe ten locations around the country that would repeat two or three times. There would be a very specific process, so that conclusions could ultimately be summarized into a document that each organization would take forward to its members as a blueprint for where we're going.

"Today, more consumers are failing to find value in funeral services. And for the first time, I see fear in the eyes of funeral directors. They are casting about searching for answers, so I think most are interested in finally getting this resolved.

"I know I am making people uncomfortable with this, but I'm probably in the best position to bring this forward. I am a funeral director, not a social scientist or someone from the outside. I've been around long enough that people know I care very deeply about funeral service and have the best intentions of trying to help." ▲

Selected members are encouraged to express their views on this topic through our electronic discussion groups by sending an email to general-forum@sifh.org or posting a message online at the Forum at Selected, selectedfuneralhomes.org/forum.

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"Funeral Home Reports are available to any funeral home provider for up to eight counties and cost \$450. Selected members receive a \$50 discount using the Selected order form available at selectedfuneralhomes.org/vendors. The reports use the most current Medicare information available to detail mortality by county across the range of caregiving providers. This information is unavailable anywhere else and is essential to funeral home owners and managers in

making data-driven decisions regarding their strategic planning, market position, outreach and goal-setting.

"We've been receiving a lot of orders and inquiries from Selected members, and we're excited to help them improve their services. John Horan and I will be co-presenting a Study Session at the upcoming Annual Meeting, clarifying what information is available and how it can be used most effectively." ▲

Members may contact Hospice Analytics in Colorado Springs, CO, at 719-209-1237.