



# Hospice News **VOICES**

## **Erica Gregory** SVP and GM Revenue Cycle Management, Netsmart

This article is sponsored by Netsmart. In this Voices interview, Hospice News sits down with Erica Gregory, SVP and GM of Revenue Cycle Management, Netsmart, to discuss how back office automation powers an efficient revenue cycle and the ways that automation can address trends that hospice care professionals are witnessing.

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Editor's note: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

In addition to automation-infused offerings, Netsmart can support hospice organizations through coaching. Learn how Netsmart RCM experts shared best practices to help Catholic Hospice with cash collections and billing efficiency by visiting [ntst.com/resources-and-insights/success-stories/catholic-hospice-success-story](https://ntst.com/resources-and-insights/success-stories/catholic-hospice-success-story)

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**Q: Hospice News:**  
**What career experiences do you most draw from in your role today?**

**Erica Gregory:** In my current role, a couple of ways I support our Netsmart clients is by guiding them through upcoming regulatory changes and helping them navigate the labor challenges affecting our industry. As a CHFP (Certified Healthcare Financial Professional), I see the entire financial picture for our clients. This holistic view guides the strategy behind our revenue cycle management offerings and influences staffing and integration efforts throughout the continuum.

Drawing on over a decade of experience during the Meaningful Use era, I saw firsthand the rapid pace of regulatory shifts and the evolving labor market. This experience taught me the importance of agility and the need to approach each day ready to tackle new challenges. I've also learned the value of maintaining a sense of lightness amidst these challenges, to stay focused on our ultimate goal.

In the hospice sector, we're reminded daily of the impact our work has on patients and their families. It's this connection to the people we serve that underscores the necessity for the hard, flexible work we do.

**Q: Hospice News:**  
**What questions should revenue cycle technology and operations teams consider when expanding or improving their use of automation?**

**Gregory:** In figuring out our next automation steps, we stick to a simple rule: measure what matters. We're always on the hunt to identify needless double-handling and slip-ups. A good place to start is identifying where in the process there's too much juggling of data or spotting where most mistakes are made.

The fascinating things about automation are its ability to repeat tasks without a hitch, slash error rates and streamline those pesky repetitive steps. Nobody's thrilled about their job being just a data-shuffling gig from point A to point B. With tech stepping in, we can not only polish up that experience, but also cut down on the slip-ups that drive everyone nuts.

Next on the docket is to avoid overdoing it. Sure, it's tempting to want to automate every single part of a workflow, but the real game-changer is when you automate a five-minute task that's done dozens of times a day. It's about zeroing in on those small, yet mighty improvements that, minute by minute, really pile up. Then it's all about empowering people to excel. We aim for staff engagement that energizes them to bring their A-game every single day. That's the stuff that counts. It boosts their morale, makes them feel in control, and leaves them fulfilled by their work. That's the kind of automation we're after—one that elevates our people to greatness.

**Q: Hospice News:**  
What is the greatest benefit that an efficient revenue cycle can provide hospice professionals, and how can back-office automation make it a reality?

**Gregory:** Similar to other health care sectors, an efficient revenue cycle is vital not only for profitability but also for enhancing the patient journey. This encompasses everything from admissions and elections to coding, billing, and collections. Streamlining these processes allows for seamless data transition and improves the experiences of patients and their families. For hospice organizations, an efficient revenue cycle strengthens their financial standing, supports their mission, and reduces the burden on staff.

The move towards automation (which can sometimes be discussed as a quick fix) actually demands careful consideration. Evaluating processes to determine what data will enhance experiences is crucial. While automation can be beneficial, it's essential to discern where it fits best and where the irreplaceable human touch is still needed.

**Q: Hospice News:**  
How can back office automation address the staffing issues that the broader health care industry is facing today?

**Gregory:** My clients often face the challenge of staffing sufficiently to support those in need. A significant concern is the burnout and frustration of staff, particularly those deeply committed to their mission who can no longer provide the care they wish to due to exhaustion. This is where automation can make a real difference. By automating the data management aspects of work, we can alleviate staff frustration. This helps eliminate delays and hold-ups in processes that hinder the ability to engage meaningfully with patients and their families.

Staff members are eager to perform well, but repeated obstacles, such as data transfer issues or navigating reimbursement processes, can be disheartening. Automating these tasks to provide staff with timely, accurate information allows them to better assist families and inform patients on what to expect. This improvement can significantly boost their job satisfaction and their ability to do their work effectively.

**Q: Hospice News:**  
In a time of booming merger and acquisition activity, how can automation in the back office create more efficiencies for hospice professionals?

**Gregory:** We've seen so much consolidation in our market. With that, you have organizations that are coming together to create one brand, and potentially consolidating or moving one group into a new brand. The consolidation of data, when we have mergers and acquisitions happen, is really important because it can support that brand conversation. It can also drive a seamless experience for the staff that are coming together, for the financials that are coming together, and for the overall experience the patients and the referral networks get.

In a merger and acquisition environment, not being able to consolidate accounts receivable (AR) is a challenge (and a costly one, at that). Using automation to consolidate AR is a big opportunity for back-office efficiency.

**Q: Hospice News:**  
Can you speak to the importance of partnering with a technology company that specializes in hospice care?

**Erica Gregory:** While automation can be an “easy button,” it requires careful planning to be effective. If it’s not done right, it could actually make things more frustrating, giving patients and their families a less genuine experience. It’s really important to work with someone who knows the hospice field well and gets what they’re trying to do. That way, when automation is brought in, it’s put to work in ways that actually help and don’t add to the problem.

On top of that, it’s reassuring to have someone who understands both hospice care and the health care industry overall. This can ensure everything is done safely and securely, from following privacy laws like HIPAA to handling the financial details properly. Teaming up with someone who’s got a strong tech and security know-how, and who also knows how hospice works, makes a big difference.



**Q: Hospice News:** In a couple of words, finish this sentence:  
**In 2023, the industry has been defined by...**

**“...regulatory changes and staff shortages.”**