



## Ed Buckley

CEO  
Select Data

In this Voices interview, Home Health Care News sits down with Ed Buckley, CEO of Select Data, to learn how Buckley and his team are redefining the capabilities of artificial intelligence solutions to empower care teams to overcome today's greatest home health challenges. He explains how Select Data is making strides to improve efficiency and health outcomes, specifically with its product SmartCareAI™, and shares the auxiliary benefits of using technology to help staff excel in their roles.

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

Select Data is committed to excellence, integrity, and innovation that empowers clinicians to deliver better patient care and agencies to achieve desired outcomes. To learn more, visit [selectdata.com](https://selectdata.com).

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

**Ed Buckley:** I've been in home health longer than I care to admit. In the early days — the '90s — I ran a chain of Medicare-certified home health agencies where we provided direct patient care. At the end of the '90s, we sold that business and transitioned into a revenue cycle management business.

We built a reputation for running a very compliant operation on the provider side of our business, to the point where some hospitals asked us to assist them. That was back in the days of Operation Restore Trust when lots of people were getting in trouble for not being as compliant as they could be. We built tools that helped us track visits against doctor's orders to make sure everything matched, including our own EHR back before EHRs were a thing.

Then, revenue cycle transitioned from a billing- and-collections focus to a coding-centric industry, and that led us to another endeavor. Both were compliance-oriented, of course, whether it was billing and collections or OASIS and coding, so we took our clinical expertise from the engine we built and applied it to that side of the business.



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We've been in that space for the last 10 or 12 years now, and I think we've created a high-quality product. Now we're in the process of using that same expertise to develop AI tools that help clinicians and providers distill the mountains of data they have to provide the best possible patient care.

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**Q: Home Health Care News:**  
What is the key problem that Select Data’s artificial intelligence solution SmartCareAI™ is solving today for home health agencies?



**Most of the meaningful data in the (health) record is stored as unstructured free text narratives, which are also time-consuming and prone to review error. This condition of health records makes them a perfect fit for artificial intelligence solutions. AI helps home health agencies balance both the accuracy and the productivity sides of the challenge.”**

**Buckley:** AI solutions are important because they help the health care-wide dilemma of striking a balance between accuracy and productivity. It’s proven that more accurate documentation produces better clinical outcomes, but at the same time, every organization feels the strain of limited resources. As patients wind their way through different care settings, the condition of their health records isn’t doing them any favors. Poor legibility of documents leads to errors, and a lack of standardization creates inconsistency in the number of documents, pages and even their formatting within the referral record.

Health records also include information for a patient’s time in other care settings, which adds to the replication of data, thus compounding the time and effort needed to review. On top of that, most of the meaningful data in the record is stored as unstructured free text narratives, which are also time-consuming and prone to review error.

This condition of health records makes them a perfect fit for artificial intelligence solutions. AI helps home health agencies balance both the accuracy and the productivity sides of the challenge. In just a few seconds, the tool can analyze hundreds of health-record pages, pull out the relevant data and frame the context of the data. This eliminates the huge amount of time needed to read through the entire document while exclusively providing the clinician or reviewer only with relevant information. Think of SmartCareAI™ as an intelligent set of medical record Cliff Notes. It’s a revolutionary product.

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**Q: Home Health Care News:**  
SmartCareAI™ uses artificial intelligence to scan massive referral documents in order to identify key patient data. What is it looking for and how much time does it save?

**Buckley:** We can read unstructured data — free text data makes up about 80% of referral records. Essentially, SmartCareAI™ will look for whatever we train it on. Since a significant percentage of relevant clinical data is found in free text, companies spend a tremendous amount of money and time manually reading these narratives. SmartCareAI™ is AI-enabled and backed by home health clinical experts. Automated clinical abstraction is 4x faster than manual abstraction and produces consistent results every time.

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**Q: Home Health Care News:  
What is the augmented home  
health workforce and how can  
home care providers use it?**

**Buckley:** We view AI as an augmentation tool designed to empower the user. It's not to automate their actions. It automates the reading of the record, obviously, but we're not automating the clinical expertise of the user. We're empowering them to get the most out of their expertise as possible. We're talking about a category of tools that empower teams to embrace home health as the specialty that it is. Augmented home health uses artificial intelligence to do tasks that computers are good at and free up humans to do what they're best at, which is using their judgment to provide the best possible patient care.

Many of the EHR solutions today automate human actions, which is fine, but the focus of augmented home health solutions is decidedly different. The goal of augmented home health is to put the right tools in the hands of the clinical teams or reviewers to let them level up their game. Our goal is to empower the people in the organization to hone their skills and practice their profession at the highest possible level.

It's a great staff-retention tool. When people feel good about what they're doing and about their profession by giving them the right tools, they feel good about themselves and they tend to stay with you. If they feel overwhelmed and you're giving them poor tools to work with, they tend to not be as happy in their work environment.



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**Q: Home Health Care News:**  
How do you see today's market for home health services changing over the next 12 to 18 months?

**Buckley:** Home health is evolving into even more of a specialty than it is, and here's why. Patients today are older, and they're sicker than they used to be. The lifespan of the patient is significantly longer than it was 10 or 15 years ago. With that, they're spending more time as home-bound patients with an increased number of comorbidities.

Today, home health is less about delivering therapy, and more about managing a complex sense of patients in need. More and more of the hospital is going into the home. Methods and techniques today mean patients spend less time in each care setting than they used to. That is due in part to the many new devices and protocols that have enabled more health care to be delivered in the home.

The combination of sicker patients and more complex in-home care is driving demand for home health as a specialty. For years, we have known that home health has attracted a very special breed of RNs and clinicians who are able to operate with a certain amount of autonomy. While they don't technically have a license to practice medicine, they operate in disparate environments with their own set of challenges and act as a conduit for physician orders.

Now we're asking these clinicians to do even more. From advanced wound care to remote diagnostics, a larger and larger percentage of complex care will be delivered by clinicians in the home. As more of these services become in-home standards, more capabilities will be required of that home health specialty.



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**Q: Home Health Care News:**  
What impact is AI having on value-based purchasing today, and how do you predict that impact will evolve over the same time frame?

**Buckley:** Home health is facing a major set of challenges due to the complex nature of the health data agencies receive — and that’s in addition to staffing shortages, patients with more comorbidity conditions, caregiver burnout, et cetera. Artificial intelligence can empower the home health clinicians to not only make the most sense of all the clinical documentation they receive, but also enhance their ability to create the most comprehensive plan of care in the least amount of time possible.

This promotes stronger patient outcomes through accurate clinical documentation, and helps to decrease acute care re-hospitalizations by identifying key factors that influence health status. We believe it also provides for improvement in patient satisfaction scores since the clinicians have more time to address patient challenges.

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**Q: Home Health Care News:** Finish this sentence:

**The top strategy that home-based care providers should employ in 2022 to best prepare for 2023 is...**

**“Providing better tools in order to deal with the staffing challenges and retention.”**