HME Business VOICES

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This article is sponsored by Brightree. As home-based care organizations work to scale operations without sacrificing quality, automation and AI are stepping in to reduce manual work and support more efficient, patient-centered workflows. In this Voices interview, HME Business sits down with Sudha Sureddi, Vice President, Product Management at Brightree, to discuss how automation is reshaping the DME and post-acute care landscape, why transparency and usability matter just as much as innovation and how Brightree is helping providers accelerate care delivery while enhancing the clinician and patient experience.

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

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Q: HME Business:
What brought you into this space, and what kind of changes have you seen around the urgency of automation in post-acute and home care settings during your career?

Sudha Sureddi: I've worked in different facets of health care over the past decade and a half, but it was a personal experience that really brought me into the HME and post-acute care space. Postpartum, my husband very kindly and lovingly pointed out that I had started snoring. There were classic signs, but it's only after you go through the experience that you realize how this market changes lives with at home care. That's what introduced me to the DME industry, and I've since been through the journey myself.

What struck me most was the value and impact of post-acute care. These care settings allow patients to receive ongoing support outside of a hospital and continue living their lives while improving their quality of life. That realization is what pulled me into this space.

Since then, post-COVID, the industry has faced major staffing shortages and increased costs, while reimbursement rates continue to be stifled. That's created immense pressure for our customers to run more efficiently. Automation is no longer optional. It's essential. There's a clear need to streamline workflows so that teams can focus on delivering a patient-centered experience, rather than spending their time on manual tasks.

That's the experience that's guided our focus at Brightree: finding what we automate for our customers, and how we can help boost their efficiency.

Q: HME Business:
As automation and AI streamline repetitive tasks, how do we ensure that we're enhancing the clinician and patient experience without eroding the empathy that defines quality care?

Sudha Sureddi: A recent publication of an MIT Study showed that 95% of AI-based products focused on intelligence or automated workflows are failing today. That's largely because these solutions are being built for the sake of using AI, rather than solving a real problem for users or patients.

What we emphasize at Brightree is keeping the user and the patient at the center of everything we build. We want to solve meaningful problems, not just deploy AI for the sake of it. There's still a lot of apprehension around AI because for most people, it feels like a black box. Unless you're working in it every day, it's hard to fully understand what it can and can't do.

That's why our focus is on transparency and user empowerment. We want the user to understand what's happening, what the outcome means and how they can positively influence that outcome. That clarity and control helps increase adoption because people don't feel like they're handing over responsibility to a system they don't understand. They're part of it. And when you design AI that way, it enhances the experience rather than replacing the empathy and human touch that make care so powerful.
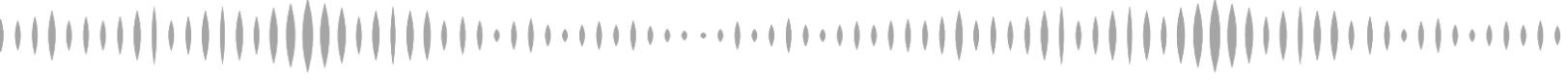
Q: HME Business:

Product leaders are often challenged to prove ROI while managing implementation risk and change fatigue. How does Brightree balance short-term efficiency gains with long-term outcomes like adoption and satisfaction?

Sureddi: Different stakeholders across an organization tend to look at ROI in different ways. For some, it's about short-term financial impact like operational efficiency or avoiding the need to hire additional staff. But at Brightree, we focus on both the immediate and long-term outcomes. That includes improving operational workflows, reducing financial burden and ultimately increasing the quality of patient care.

One of our biggest priorities is helping HME providers compress their order-to-cash timelines. When we can reduce that window, providers can reinvest that time and energy into direct patient care, expanding product offerings instead of being bogged down by manual, repetitive tasks. That's how we measure success: not just by what's saved, but by what's enabled.

Q: HME Business:

Please give us an example where smarter workflow automation improved not only operations, but also had a measurable impact downstream on patients, clinicians or overall staff morale.

Sureddi: One of our newest innovations, Intelligent Document Automation, is the first workflow-embedded product we've launched at Brightree. It's already having a major impact on shortening the time between referral and order creation, improving the accuracy of patient information, and accelerating care delivery.

To give you a simple example, think about something as basic as entering a patient's address. Say a referral lists the patient at apartment 103, but someone manually enters it as 203. That small mistake can delay patient care by 7 to 10 days. The order gets shipped to the wrong place, comes back and has to be redone. Meanwhile, the patient is waiting for an item they urgently need.

With Intelligent Document Automation, we've built a much more robust process that translates unstructured referrals into a structured, standardized, streamlined workflow, regardless of the referral source. That standardization leads to faster, more accurate orders, improved patient satisfaction and a smoother reimbursement cycle. It's a win across the board.

Q: HME Business:

What are the top lessons you've learned from scaling automation across complex organizations, especially when balancing standardization with the unique needs of individual teams or care settings?

Sureddi: AI is here to stay, and one of our biggest lessons has been around building the right guardrails. As we've developed products in this space, we've learned a lot about how to design solutions that are not only scalable and secure, but also meaningful for real users across all levels of an enterprise.

What's also become clear is that customers today are highly informed. They're looking for robust, world-class tools that meet industry standards and deliver clear value. But adoption still hinges on education. Every user has a different level of familiarity with AI, so we're putting a huge emphasis on training to meet people where they are.

The biggest takeaway? Stay focused on solving real problems. It's easy to get distracted by how many things AI can do. But success comes from zeroing in on the pain points that matter most for patient care and making sure your solution actually delivers on that value.

Q: HME Business:

Where do you see the next wave of AI-driven innovation having the greatest impact on health care workflows? And how can leaders prepare their teams now to adapt effectively?

Sureddi: AI has already elevated what automation could do on its own. Now, with the rise of agentic AI and large language models, the potential for deeper, more intelligent automation has grown exponentially.

Looking ahead, I believe the biggest impact will come from predictive models and AI-supported decision-making. Imagine providers being able to proactively manage compliance, spot trends in patient behavior and initiate outreach before issues arise, rather than reacting after the fact. That kind of foresight could be game-changing for both outcomes and efficiency.

To get there, though, we need to focus on building comfort and trust. As adoption grows, the goal is to shift more time and energy toward patient care, not away from it. Leaders can prepare their teams by encouraging openness, investing in education and grounding AI use in real-world workflows that reduce the burden of manual, repetitive tasks. When that happens, teams aren't just adapting to change — they're empowered by it.

Q: HME Business: Finish the statement:

"In 2026, automation in the HME space will be the year of…"?

"…Innovation, endurance and growth."