



## The Future of Virtual Care

Hospitals and health systems found a lifeline in telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic; now they're developing long-term virtual care strategies

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth adoption rapidly expanded across the country as hospitals and health systems dramatically reduced in-person services. Policymakers made swift changes to many pre-pandemic barriers to telehealth – including policies on open state medical licenses, platform security (i.e., HIPAA), patient location and reimbursements. As a result, clinicians gained much-needed flexibility to adopt video conferencing solutions and connect with their patients while minimizing exposure.

“We don’t typically move fast in healthcare, but in the pandemic, organizations were incredibly agile,” said Shayan Vyas, MD, MBA, Vice President and Medical Director of Clinical Operations at Teladoc Health. “We saw healthcare organizations and practices integrate telehealth solutions within a matter of days.”

Now that patients, clinicians and payers have fully embraced the technology, Vyas believes we’ve reached a tipping point: “There’s no going back. We just need to make sure the healthcare ecosystem, including legislatures, continue to make telehealth secure, easy and sustainable.”

### A new era in virtual care

The rapid adoption by patients of telehealth in 2020 didn’t surprise Vyas. With a decade of experience in digital health, he’s seen how digital adoption in retail and other industries has primed consumers for virtual care.

According to a McKinsey survey, the pandemic only cemented that interest: More than 75% of consumers reported they were interested in using telehealth in their post-pandemic future.<sup>1</sup>

What made this such a critical year for telehealth was the dramatic adoption rates among clinicians, health systems and physician practices. “Now that patients and clinicians are

both comfortable with the technology, they will look for its conveniences moving forward,” said Vyas. “In this way, the future of telehealth will be just health.”

It’s critical then to establish a virtual care strategy beyond COVID-19 and make sure your enterprise has the secure and sustainable infrastructure to see it through, according to Vyas. Looking three or more years down the road, how can telehealth support the strategic goals of your organization?

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## A purpose-built platform

Vyas understands that for many healthcare organizations, it’s “crawl, walk, run” toward telehealth transformation. Start by building a strong foundation in your platform.

With the well-known security risks and scalability issues that come with consumer-grade video solutions, organizations should look to a purpose-built platform that can integrate with existing IT systems and clinical workflows for quick user adoption and program growth.<sup>2</sup> “You don’t take a knife to the operating room; you take a scalpel designed for surgery,” he said.

Vyas offers these four considerations when selecting an enterprise-level platform:

- **Security.** Make sure your platform addresses cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities, data protection standards and physical security. Many consumer-grade solutions lack the adequate safeguards to keep your organization HIPAA-compliant. “The privacy between physician and patient is a sacred relationship and it needs to stay that way,” said Vyas.
- **Scalability.** Look for a solid operational platform that connects to the rest of your IT systems. You will need a scalable solution that can maintain multiple connection points between patients and physicians without interruption.
- **Patient engagement.** How easily can patients engage with your platform? “Health systems should think of telehealth as their virtual front door,” said Vyas. “Choose a platform that can service patients from diverse backgrounds, ages and educational levels to reduce – not add to – any healthcare friction.”

- **Clinician adoption.** Vyas believes any new technology added to clinical workflow should make it easier to practice medicine: “We want clinicians to focus on patient care, not the technology around it.” And as physician adoption increases, so, too, will demands. Make sure your platform can be hyper-personalized to meet various clinical needs at scale. This will ensure your investment can one day support the majority of patient visits.

## The path forward

Through recent mergers with InTouch Health, an enterprise-telehealth company, and Livongo, a chronic care management platform, Teladoc Health sees virtual care as an opportunity to personalize care by leveraging data.

“Telehealth is not a cookie-cutter experience,” said Vyas. “With our tools, health systems and hospitals can deliver hyper-personalized medical care faster and at a lower cost – delivering medical outcomes, financial savings and patient satisfaction.”

It’s this mission-driven approach that distinguishes Teladoc Health as a partner – not just a vendor – in the digital health market.

“We will continue to invest in the tools organizations need to deliver ongoing virtual care experiences,” said Vyas. “Patients are craving a refined telehealth experience: We can help.”

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**“Today’s new normal is the future of healthcare.”**  
Learn more from [Teladoc Health](#).

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### References

1. Bestsenny, O., Gilbert, G., Harris, A., and Rost, J. 2020. Telehealth: A quarter-trillion-dollar post-COVID-19 reality? McKinsey & Company, May 29. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/telehealth-a-quarter-trillion-dollar-post-covid-19-reality>.
2. Jalali, M., Landman, A., and Gordon, W. 2020. Telemedicine, privacy, and information security in the age of COVID-19. *JAMIA* 28: 671-672. Dec. 16. doi: 10.1093/jamia/ocaa310.

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### About Teladoc Health

Teladoc Health empowers all people everywhere to live their healthiest lives by transforming the healthcare experience. As the world leader in whole-person virtual care, Teladoc Health uses proprietary health signals and personalized interactions to drive better health outcomes across the full continuum of care, at every stage in a person’s health journey. Ranked best in KLAS for Virtual Care Platforms in 2020, Teladoc Health leverages more than a decade of expertise and data-driven insights to meet the growing virtual care needs of consumers and healthcare professionals.

