Expanding care through virtual visits

A telehealth strategy: Engaged patients, improved outcomes, organization growth

Teladoc HEALTH | Microsoft Azure

From telemedicine to telehealth

A decade of advancements in technology, mobile capabilities, and connectivity have moved telehealth from the experimental to the mainstream. Providers and patients now expect a consumer-centric experience.

Despite advanced technology, healthcare still has its challenges. Doctors and caregivers continue to face problems that persist in modern medicine. Among them:

- High patient volumes and overscheduling

- Difficulty getting to remote patients and providing after-hours care

- Long patient wait times due to inefficient triage in ERs

- Unnecessary visits, which have brought soaring costs for emergency, chronic condition, and specialty care

What seemed far off just a few years ago is now upon us. Telehealth is here and brings with it foundational changes for future care delivery.

What are the essential elements needed for the mobile age to improve outcomes and reduce costs? This e-book presents strategies Teladoc Health has developed to bring the benefits of cloud computing to the practice of medicine and achieve those goals.

Adoption of telehealth programs is exploding

According to data from the 2019 Annual State of Consumer Telehealth Benchmark Survey:

59%
of organizations consider consumer telehealth a high priority

74%
increase in adoption in the last two years

88%
of healthcare systems plan to have consumer telehealth programs in place by 2021

Case study: See how it comes together for WellSpan Health →

Assess the state of your telehealth program →
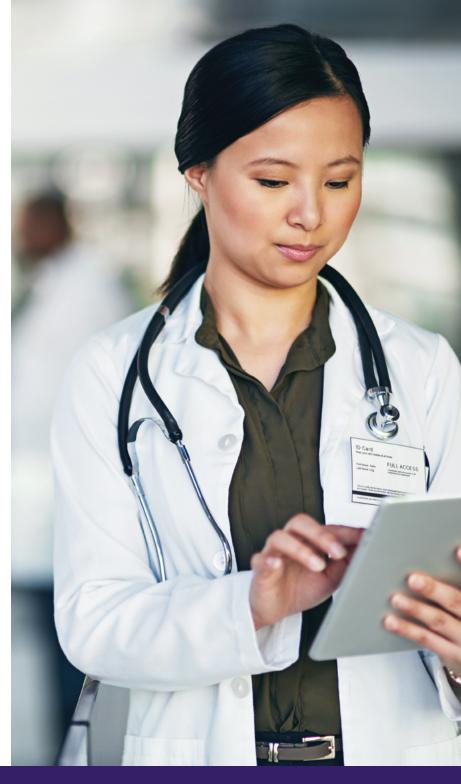
It's not just tech,
it's a transformation

The technology that made telehealth a reality started with simple, semi-reliable video calling. But, that same technology has the potential to expand the boundaries of care so much further. Properly implemented, it can:

- Improve triage to allow for increased speed and accuracy of care

- Help patients and healthcare organizations reduce the number of costly ER visits for non-emergent conditions

- Expand a healthcare organization's ability to serve patients regardless of where they are located or what time they need care

- Lower the pressure on schedulers to coordinate in-person visits with every patient, every time

- Reduce costs to both patients and healthcare organizations

These advancements are not solely technological breakthroughs. They are a combination of technology, operations, and personnel that will deliver the best results—not artificial intelligence, but *augmented* intelligence.

A virtual front door

Data mining and powerful analytics have paved new paths that guide patients to the right care at the right time.

And patients are using telehealth as a virtual front door to services with a full array of devices and ways to reliably connect to their healthcare providers. This actually strengthens the patient-physician relationship and improves access for patients with chronic conditions and limited access to quality care.

Solutions like Teladoc Health provide a licensed, white-label telehealth platform that brings a healthcare organization's brand everywhere its patients go. This ensures that patients get:

- **The same experience they expect from their provider in person,** so there's no online shock

- **A mobile resource patients trust** with the same confidence they have in their own provider

- **Expertise in exactly the same specialties as their providers**

The patient receives the expert care they need and count on, in a familiar context. Clinical infrastructure routes patients to the right virtual care clinicians in the appropriate specialties.

By guiding the patient to the right care, a telehealth service can also help a healthcare consumer become more informed and empowered to improve their own experience with each interaction.

The operational advantages of telehealth

Healthcare organizations that align a telehealth program with their brand have a leg up toward growth goals. Properly built, telehealth adds an operational infrastructure that supports brick-and-mortar facility

A larger community footprint

With growth a constant priority for healthcare systems, the consumerist paradigm of transparency and patient empowerment are key. Consumer-patients now have more access to healthcare information options than ever. They demand greater openness and control.

Telehealth enables this. It gives healthcare organizations a bigger footprint in their communities and opens revenue streams through partnerships with businesses and schools.

workflows, such as through 24/7 staffing, which organizations can leverage using their own personnel, another provider network, or in hybrid. That means convenient, affordable care, day or night. It's the next phase of consumerism.

To bring all these capabilities to life, a telehealth system needs to be built on a solid operational platform that's scalable, flexible, and highly secure. With a cloud-based telehealth system built for healthcare systems, a world of efficiencies and new possibilities opens up. Virtual care built on a software as a service (SaaS) solution, tailored to a system's needs and goals, and easily modified to keep up with the changing care landscape, means an organization will be able to adapt as the market evolves.

Plus, clinical workflows and processes benefit. Productivity and level of care improve simultaneously, offering the same or higher quality care as in-person interactions, with:

- **Improved accuracy** of patient diagnoses
- **Increased efficiency** and consistency of care
- **Time and resource savings,** reducing the burden on hospital and healthcare system staff and increasing process efficiency from admission to discharge

Telehealth frees up provider schedules while increasing patient access to care. Providers using virtual care solutions can better manage workloads by acuity or need. They can conduct low-acuity and scheduled visits virtually, saving larger blocks of time for more

complex or acute cases. With additional options, providers have more ways to interact with patients, and patients have a greater choice of access points for treatment and communication. The front doors to care multiply.

To accomplish all these goals in the cloud, Teladoc chose Microsoft Azure—the world-class cloud environment—to enable security, agility, and scalability. Azure is the first hyperscale cloud service to receive certification for the HITRUST common security framework, as well as meet the standards for the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). As a Tier 1 Microsoft Partner, Teladoc is able to leverage the industry-leading security, scalability, and agility of the Azure cloud, giving our clients unique advantages, both for patient outcomes and business advantage.

Just a few use cases

Telehealth services benefit patients and healthcare organizations in a wide range of specialties:

- Doctor appointments
- Operating room efficiency
- Oncology and palliative care
- Home healthcare
- Reselling services to local employers (commercialization)
- Improving employee benefits
- A better retail care experience (consumerization)

The cost savings opportunity

Telehealth can offer substantial savings to the patient compared to the other available care options. For instance, a patient with an urgent care need might choose to visit:

- An emergency department, with estimated costs averaging $499 to $1,233

- An urgent care clinic, at $121

- A primary care provider, at $120

- A retail walk-in clinic with physician assistants or nurse practitioners rather than physicians, at $76[1]

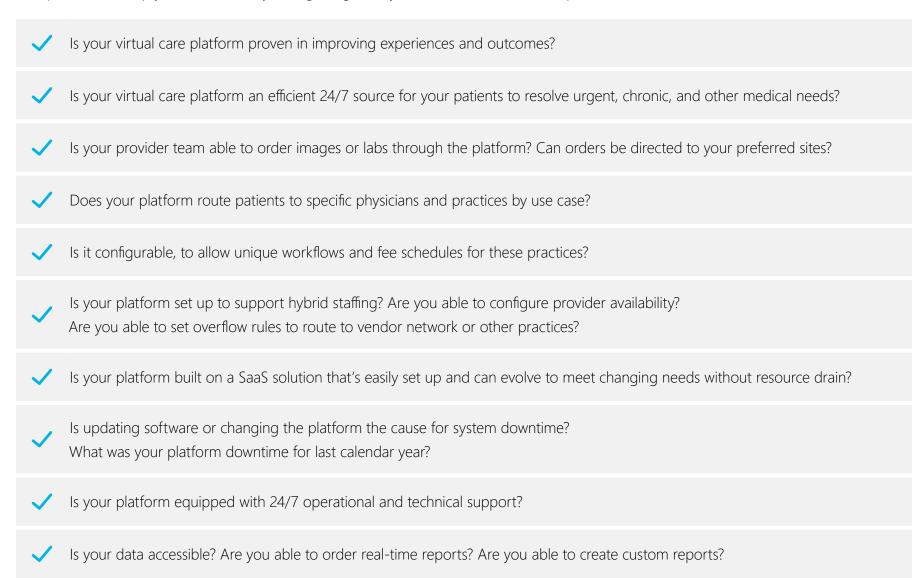**In contrast, telehealth averages $39 per doctor's appointment.**

In fact, 93 percent of telehealth users reported the service reduced their costs.

And a recent study by Veracity Analytics of over 2 million members found that for a client with the standard $45 visit fee, episodic savings per Teladoc visit were $472.

[1]White paper: *Aim Higher with Telehealth: Advancing from Triple to Quadruple Aim*, produced by Teladoc

Telehealth assessment

Ten questions to help you determine if you're getting what you need from a telehealth platform:

✓ Is your virtual care platform proven in improving experiences and outcomes?

✓ Is your virtual care platform an efficient 24/7 source for your patients to resolve urgent, chronic, and other medical needs?

✓ Is your provider team able to order images or labs through the platform? Can orders be directed to your preferred sites?

✓ Does your platform route patients to specific physicians and practices by use case?

✓ Is it configurable, to allow unique workflows and fee schedules for these practices?

✓ Is your platform set up to support hybrid staffing? Are you able to configure provider availability?
Are you able to set overflow rules to route to vendor network or other practices?

✓ Is your platform built on a SaaS solution that's easily set up and can evolve to meet changing needs without resource drain?

✓ Is updating software or changing the platform the cause for system downtime?
What was your platform downtime for last calendar year?

✓ Is your platform equipped with 24/7 operational and technical support?

✓ Is your data accessible? Are you able to order real-time reports? Are you able to create custom reports?

WellSpan Health:
Doubling an ambitious goal

WellSpan Health of central Pennsylvania is committed to their mission to transform care through sophisticated clinical information technology and by developing innovative new models as a means to create a high-quality, exceptional patient experience regardless of where patients are in central Pennsylvania or on life's journey. This makes them a great partner for Teladoc.

Challenge

At the same time as it was upgrading its electronic health record system, WellSpan Health launched its first on-demand telehealth program to allow patients to access care directly.

WellSpan's top requirement for selecting a partner was finding one that had both the flexibility and the services to fit the organization's strategy. This made Teladoc an even better match for them. WellSpan's most important telehealth program goals were to learn, improve, and position itself for a more consumer-oriented future. The project was part of WellSpan's efforts to make healthcare easier for patients to access, so it did not focus initially on setting profit and return-on-investment targets. WellSpan set a goal of having

10 percent of eligible users signed up to use telehealth services by the end of the first year.

Solution

First, WellSpan began offering telehealth services to its 26,000 employees and their families on its own health plan, then began offering group plans to employers. These steps are precursors to offering direct-to-consumer (DTC) services to the general public. Teladoc Health is an ideal partner, because it provides care covered by 450 medical subspecialties.

Results

WellSpan exceeded its first-year patient enrollment target of 10 percent within the first 30 days and doubled its enrollment goal within six months. Now WellSpan has the flexibility to easily scale and support growing patient demand. Monthly telehealth visit volume grew from just shy of 50 visits in the first month to more than 350 in the sixth, and cumulative volume exceeded 2,000 after nine months.

Expanding access to quality health care

Combining the latest cloud-based technology, a dedicated business unit, and operational support, Teladoc Health partners with Microsoft Azure to provide a comprehensive telehealth solution tailored to exceed the evolving needs of hospitals and healthcare systems.

Find out how we can help you bring your services and outcomes into the telehealth era.

Explore more

eBook: Expanding care through virtual visits
teladoc.com/healthsystems

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