

# GOING THE DISTANCE

## Why Remote Work Solutions Work for Patients and Providers

A new model of care, “connected health,” promises to reduce costs and improve quality by working with patients proactively, irrespective of location. Combining remote work solutions and telemedicine afford healthcare organizations a sustainable course to improve operational efficiency and boost patient satisfaction.

But where did telehealth really begin? You’d have to go back to the 1850s for that answer. The first major example of telecommunications for medical purposes came about during the Civil War. The telegraph was used to order medical supplies and transmit casualty reports. Then came Mr. Bell and his telephone. Articles from a late 19th-century medical journal report the telephone was used to cut down on unnecessary office visits as early as 1879.



Flashforward to 1964, when telemedicine got its first modern upgrade due to one crucial question: could the human body function in outer space? That’s when NASA established the Integrated Medical and Behavioral Laboratories and Measurement Systems (IMBLMS) program to develop a means to acquire, analyze and transmit, “...a wide variety of medical, biochemical, microbiological and behavioral measurements.”

Telehealth has come a long way since then. Mordor Intelligence estimates that the telemedicine market will be worth more than \$66 billion globally in 2021. Consumer studies bear that out.

A recent survey conducted by The Harris Poll and commissioned by Change Healthcare revealed that the pandemic has radically changed consumer expectations toward obtaining future care. The overwhelming majority, 80%, say COVID-19 rendered telehealth “an indispensable part of the healthcare system.”

No doubt that increasing mobility, transparency and sharing health data electronically will benefit both consumers and clinicians for the long haul. But with system evolution comes risk. That means providers must create the appropriate policies and procedures to protect their organization from loss of patient data or, far worse, patient trust. Following are reasons why integrating remote care delivery into strategic plans and workflows can help health systems make economic sense of the post-pandemic world.



## REMOTE CARE MEANS READY CARE

Remote working opportunities have grown steadily over the last few decades, especially in service-related industries. Healthcare, however, has been slow to embrace it for many reasons. Hospitals are financially tied to multiple brick-and-mortar facilities, and providers have been reluctant to adopt virtual health. Now, delivering quality care from remote locations is realistic due to continued advancements in technology and highly trained, adaptable employees.

According to the July 29, 2020 issue of Siemens Healthineers Newsletter, the types of healthcare teams working from home now include a variety of skill sets. In addition to clinicians offering telehealth services, case managers, administrative staff, and financial and IT teams all contribute to operational efficiency without being on the frontlines of care.

Aside from the obvious benefit of reduced commuting times, remote work arrangements have been shown to improve employee morale, as well as decrease stress and burnout. The upshot is a reduced incidence of treatment errors, as well as increased productivity.

While Covid-19 may have been the catalyst, the real driving force that operationalized work-from-home infrastructure in 2020 was innovation. The pandemic forced providers

to rethink care modalities using existing and developing technologies. Streamlining workflows and knowledge-sharing across technical skill sets reduced pressure on resources. In addition, specialists in low-demand areas offered virtual consultations, and quarantined employees with milder symptoms continued to work from home.

Likewise, leveraging the right technologies has led to the remote and efficient monitoring of patient health 24/7. The wide acceptance of wearable devices that automatically record and wirelessly transmit information, such as heart rate, blood glucose, gait, tremors, physical activity or sleep patterns, can be shared with physicians prior to online appointments for review and discussion.

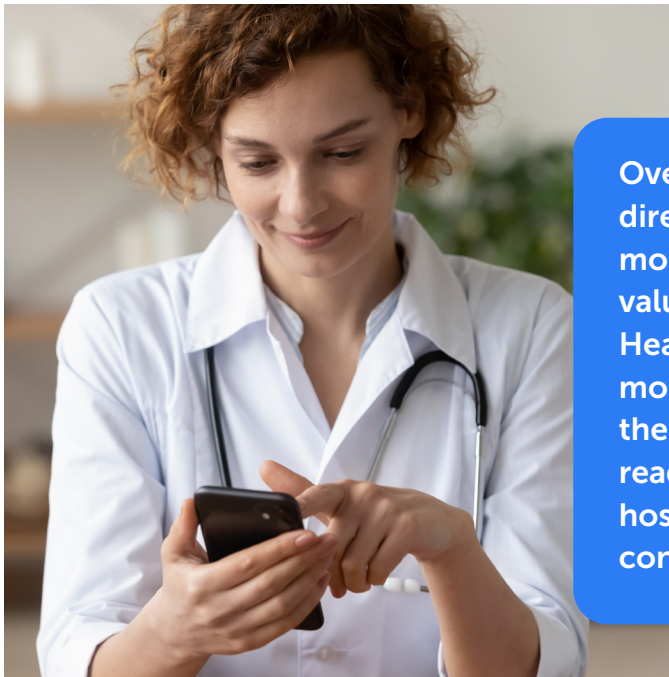
Consumers, in fact, prove to be broadly enthusiastic about digital innovations that bring provider and patient closer together—even as these innovations remain underutilized by healthcare organizations. The 2021 NRC Health Consumer Trends report identified that 50% of those surveyed would trust the information gathered by these devices to be relayed directly from the device to their doctor's office. 57% fully believe that data would be useful in conversations with their providers and would want it to be collected if they have a reason to seek care.

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The demand for remote care is only expected to grow as baby boomers age. Home-based options can help older adults stay in their own homes and live as independently as they can for as long as possible. Remote Patient Monitoring, or RPM, helps manage chronic conditions and enables providers to monitor data from a centralized location. Not only will this enhance patient quality of life, but it can help providers deliver more precise care in real-time.

An added benefit of RPM is its capacity to reduce strain on family caregivers. Often sandwiched between aging parents and growing children, caregivers feel the pressure of being there when aid is needed. Remote care strategies offer them the opportunity to more easily balance life and work demands. In addition, policy makers are beginning to address regulatory barriers to home-based care, allowing telehealth strategies to meet the multi-faceted needs of families.

Digital assistants such as Google Home and Amazon's Alexa are also being used for chronic disease management and enhanced care coordination. With user permission, this technology could soon help doctors remotely diagnose mental illness, autism, concussions and Parkinson's disease, or even detect when patients are having a heart attack.



**Over time, unobtrusive, direct-to-consumer care will become more complex but also more clinically valuable. The Center for Connected Health Policy notes that remote monitoring can serve to reduce the number of hospitalizations, readmissions and lengths of stay in hospitals. And that's good news for consumers and providers alike.**

## SECURE DATA SECURES TRUST

In 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) finalized rules that gave patients unprecedented access to their healthcare data, enabling them to make informed decisions and better manage their care. The ruling afforded patients the ability to manage their healthcare the same way they manage their finances, travel, and many other components of their lives – online.

But what about the exposure of data shared from digital devices as a product of remote or home-based care? While mobility brings accessibility to the equation, connecting data across platforms also brings risk. In general, patients don't take the same steps to protect their protected health information (PHI) that a provider would take. Understanding the risks involved with using mobile devices in healthcare means that providers must create the appropriate policies and procedures to protect both patients and their organization from loss of patient data or damaged patient trust.

This is particularly true when providing services where both the health professional and the patient are using laptops, tablets or mobile phones. Patient devices, and even those of healthcare providers, can be left unencrypted, or lacking in adequate password protection. Mobile devices are also easily lost and unfortunately sometimes stolen. Screenshots containing PHI can be quickly grabbed then forwarded without the proper permissions.

Home Wi-Fi networks, found in 76% of American households, are only as secure as the least secure device attached to them. Even if health professionals ensure that their own mobile devices and Wi-Fi connections are secure, the risk remains that a patient has not taken the necessary steps to ensure the security of their personal Wi-Fi network.

Healthcare providers can easily address protecting PHI through online training modules, helping employees understand what types of information need to be encrypted and what types do not. Training can also provide information about what the organization's encryption process is and how employees can use it. In this respect, education is key to compliance.

**Moving forward, regulators will continue to take a strong stance on the need to secure data. Consumer surveys show that patients trust their local hospitals and providers more than insurers, big tech or big pharma. With connected health becoming more essential to patients, how providers handle data will make or break that patient trust in the future. Healthcare organizations with highly integrated IT systems that allow easy and secure transfer of information, therefore, will have an advantage over those that don't.**

## VALIDATING VIRTUAL CARE

Why is the adoption of virtual care so important to health systems now? Because providers and patients alike have entered a new phase of telehealth adoption.



According to a 2020 study by Syneos Health, the number of practices offering telemedicine in the U.S. grew from 59% to 76% at the height of the pandemic. As physicians continued to look for new ways to replace in-person visits with virtual care, an overwhelming majority embraced telemedicine as a viable alternative. Those in oncology and general/family practices have seen the largest increase in COVID-related telemedicine adoption compared to other specialties.

The rise of virtual specialty care, however, will likely deliver an aftershock to the post-pandemic world. The Harris Poll revealed the extent to which more telehealth options are wanted, especially those providing a true, end-to-end virtual care experience. Consumers will seek providers who can simulate the in-person visit online through video visits and deliver a broader range of specialized expertise. Providers who do will drive utilization and boost patient engagement.

In response, massive infusions of capital are driving the development of new technology-enabled medicine across the continuum of care. Digital health giants have begun merging to accelerate the expansion of these integrated, “full-stack” specialty care platforms. The pandemic has also attracted new players to the virtual health space, with the IT industry eyeing new opportunities to address healthcare inefficiencies.

Health insurance providers open to exploring remote care models are accelerating the trend, too. Prior to coronavirus, some insurers didn’t have expansive telehealth coverage, while others had lower reimbursement rates than in-clinic visits. This made it a challenge for health systems to support a comprehensive telehealth program. Now payers are adjusting reimbursement coverage and rates to ensure patients, no matter where they live, have more affordable access to virtual care.





MobiHealthNews, part of the HIMSS media family, points to asynchronous communication as a benefit of telemedicine. Asynchronous telemedicine involves acquiring medical data, then transmitting it to a doctor or medical specialist at a convenient time for assessment offline. This means patients receive timely specialty care without the need to travel beyond the location of their primary care provider. In areas with shortages of medical specialists, wait times for specialty care are diminished, and extended delays in obtaining a treatment plan are moderated.

The nationwide shortage of doctors and nurses has made mobile health an increasingly attractive option, especially for patients who don't want to trek to physician offices for basic care. Well before the pandemic, some providers were already enabling their patients to summon clinicians to their homes via online access. A modern-day adaptation of the "house call," patients could obtain a surprisingly wide array of basic healthcare services this way. In some cases, it has been offered by employers as an employee benefit, enabling thousands to have care conveniently delivered to their door.

**Even as the urgency brought about by Covid-19 fades, healthcare leaders and patients alike have changed their expectations about care options. The future will pivot off convenience and a connection with providers, not an office or physical location. The inevitable reset of remote monitoring and commercial telemedicine will largely shape the future of care to better support patients and providers. And the availability of highly skilled remote workers packs added value into mobile health. In such situations, work-from-home solutions can provide healthcare systems with a cost-effective and compassionate alternative to yesterday's delivery model.**

# ABOUT REVATION SYSTEMS

At Revation Systems, we have a passion for making the complex simple and embracing risk to deliver great results. We have a security first mindset and a purpose built approach to everything we do from our policies and processes to our infrastructure and architecture. Security is at the core of our DNA; both at the organizational level and for the architecture of our technology. Security is not a check box for us, but rather an approach that starts from the ground up and influences every product we bring to market. We take the hard road every time to ensure our customer's data -- in the two most tightly regulated markets -- remains protected.

Our secure solutions have been validated with our HITRUST Certification. For financial providers, HITRUST certification means that the organization in question (including its products) has already undergone rigorous scrutiny and is a verified-secure partner whose technology and organization could leverage for its digital transformation without fear, hesitation or time spent on an additional internal review.

We believe in the power of human relationships and that innovation in communication will connect people to help achieve financial security and live healthier lives. Revation Systems serves hundreds of healthcare and finance consumers in the U.S. with its all-in-one full contact center in the cloud with the ability to drive experience across digital and physical channels. LinkLive is unified communications software hosted in the cloud that offers a broad range of capabilities including rich digital messaging, a seamless ability to engage humans across physical and digital channels, and leading voice and video communications.

We offer the advanced, sophisticated capabilities are expected in a contact center like skills-based routing, session recording, workforce management, agent scheduling, and quality monitoring tools. We also offer a broad range of digital capabilities from chat, secure mail, and co-browsing to the ability for digital users to engage the physical channels and humans at a healthcare or banking organization. Since its founding in 2003, Revation has been dedicated to the belief that the quality of communications can be increased, while the costs and hassles can be decreased, using virtual communications with a cloud-based platform.

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