

Boosting Adoption



Want to delight patients?



Boost telehealth adoption

It's routine. "There's an app for that." Who among us hasn't uttered those words? We use our smartphones to summon rides to the airport, order takeout, and buy groceries. Conveniences that were unthinkable only a few years ago are now old habits. With advances and innovations coming at us so quickly, we are hardly surprised when another great idea becomes part of our regular routine. Once there was a time when we would have said, "What will they think of next?" Now we more often wonder, "Why didn't we think of this before?"

But in healthcare, this kind of innovation seems to happen much more slowly, and adoption of new technologies can be glacial. Take telehealth.

We've heard over and over that virtual care is the next big thing in healthcare. That millennials and large swaths of other generations crave convenience and speed over in-person interaction. [The Advisory Board](#) found that 77 percent of patients are willing to use virtual care¹ and 90 percent of patients feel no obligation to stay with a provider that doesn't offer digital tools.² They know they could save money, time, and hassle by using virtual visits. Interestingly though, only 19 percent have taken advantage of their provider's telehealth offerings.

So what gives? Why aren't more of them doing so?

In this ebook, we'll explore what's holding patients back from giving telehealth a try, and how we can help them overcome those barriers.



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Agenda: 3 Ways to Boost Telehealth Adoption

1

Build awareness with marketing and communication

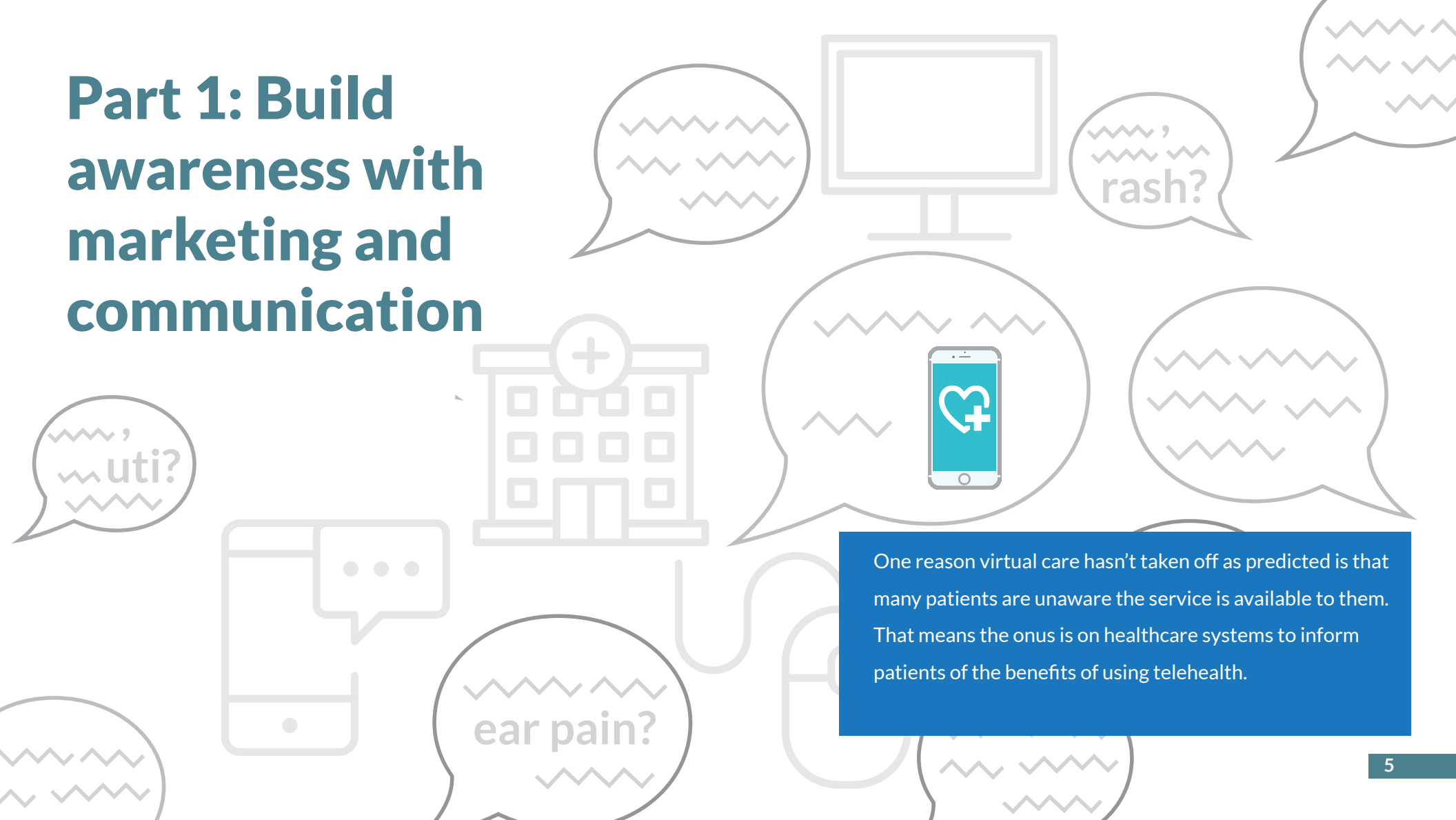
2

Overcome concerns about quality of care

3

Treat every patient interaction as an opportunity for engagement

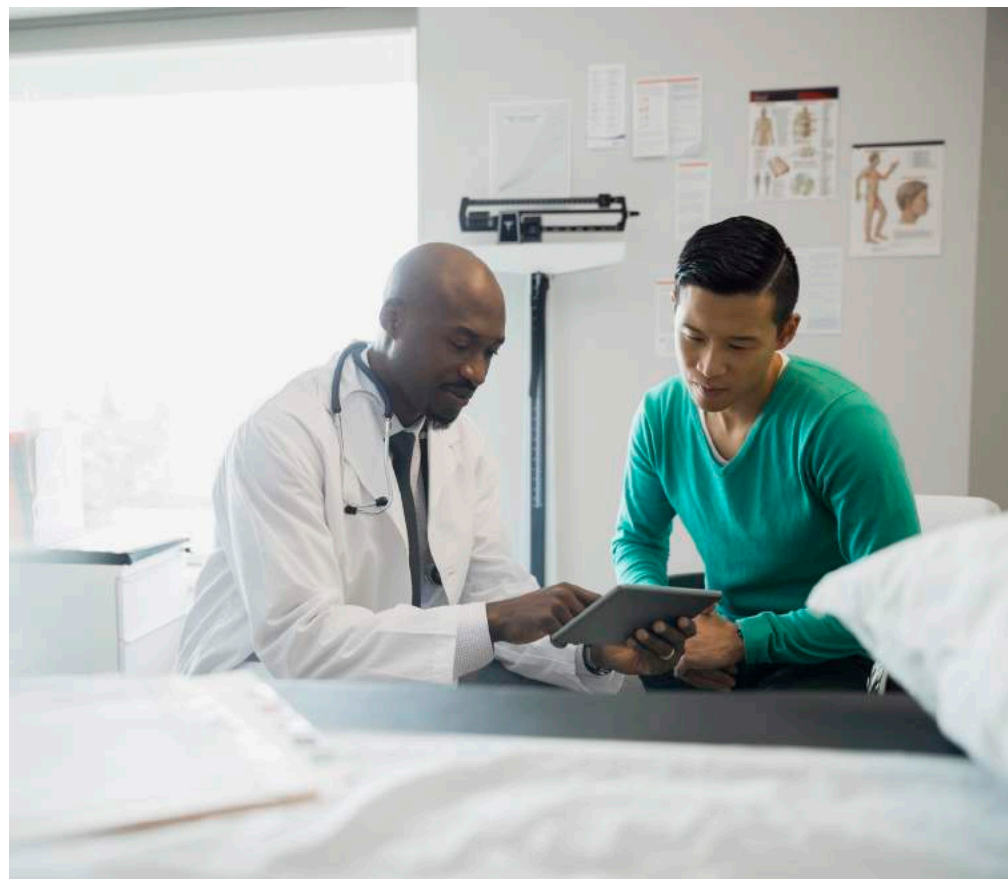
Part 1: Build awareness with marketing and communication



One reason virtual care hasn't taken off as predicted is that many patients are unaware the service is available to them. That means the onus is on healthcare systems to inform patients of the benefits of using telehealth.

Physician recommendation

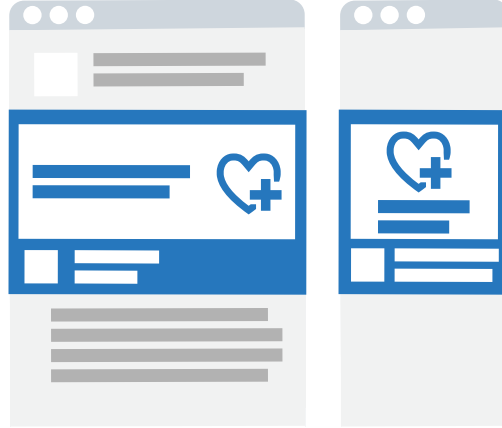
One of the most trusted sources of health information is the clinician. If patients hear about telehealth services from their trusted primary care provider, they are far more likely to give it a try. In fact, patients with chronic conditions are almost twice as likely to use virtual care if their primary physician recommends it.³ That said, recommendations from insurance providers and employers can also drive virtual care adoption. And that means we need to secure buy-in from those constituents—physicians in particular.





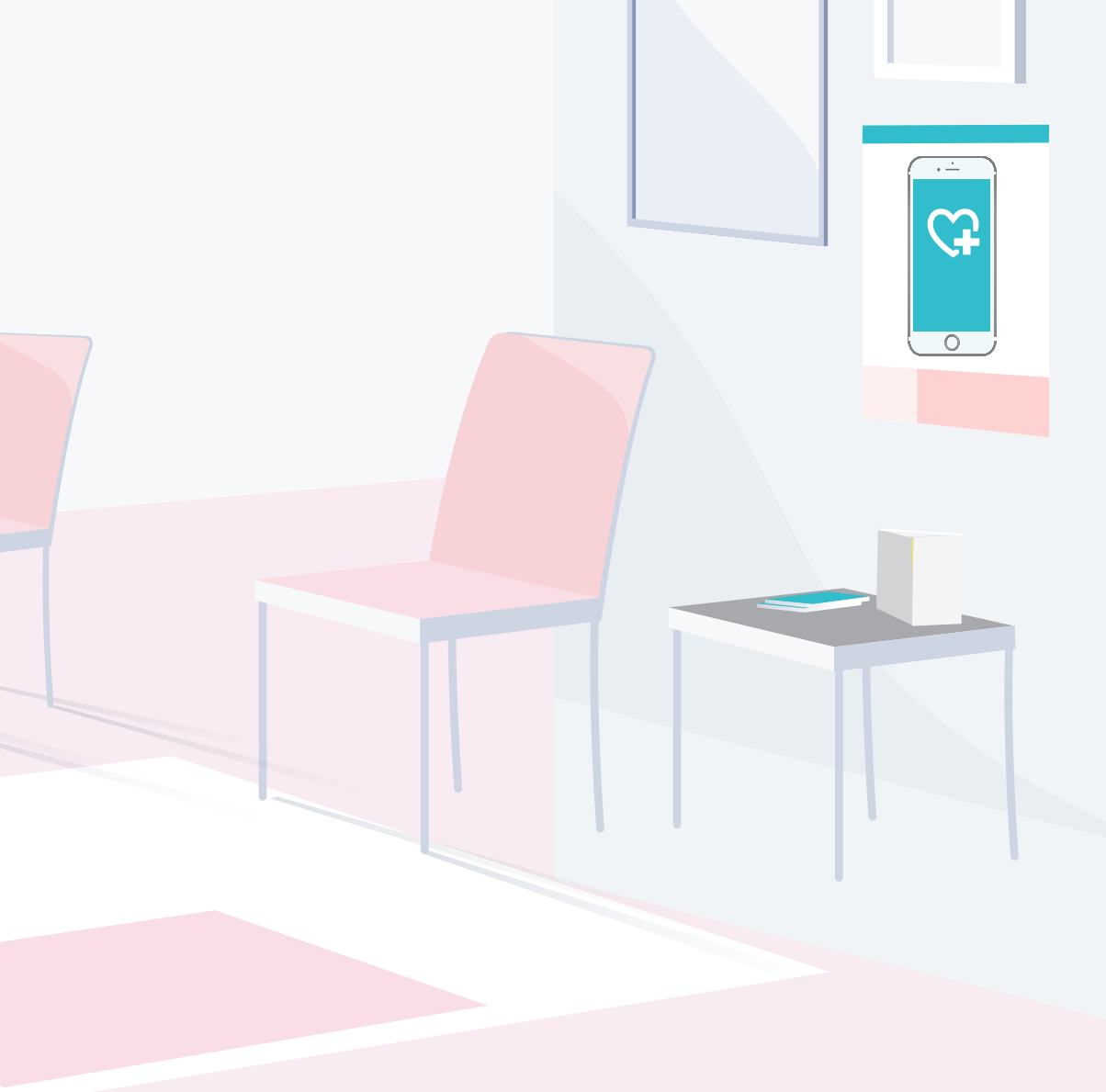
Social media and digital

Tech-savvy consumers are the most likely patients to try telehealth. The most effective ways to reach them are through social media and targeted digital campaigns. An added benefit to digital marketing is the ability to target specific groups. Treatment for UTIs and birth control will appeal far more to your female patients within a certain age group, for example.



Friends and family

The best kind of marketing is the kind you can't buy—word of mouth. Patients who have had a positive experience with telehealth will tell their friends and family about it. Create ways that make it easy for your patients to share their enthusiasm. Send them feedback forms, online surveys, and the ability to post to their social networks. Then watch the referrals come in.



Posters and advertising

When we're talking about new healthcare technologies and how to promote them, it's easy to overlook traditional forms of advertising and marketing. But in-office posters and pamphlets are still effective at driving patients to adopt new care delivery platforms. Community advertising—in the form of billboards, radio and tv spots, and direct mail pieces—can change behavior as well.

We know that patients are willing to give virtual health a try, and that once they do, they have a good experience and are more likely to use it again. The chasm between those who are willing to use it and those who have actually taken advantage of it can be bridged by strategic marketing and good communication.



Part 2: Overcome concerns about quality of care

While 85 percent of patients say they want and expect virtual care access,⁴ many of them have not utilized it due to concerns about the quality of the care⁵ they will receive.

However, studies have proven that the quality of virtual care visits compares favorably⁶ to in-office visits. And patients who have used telehealth services often give extremely high marks for satisfaction.

Any effort to boost patient adoption of telehealth, then, must include a strategy to fight against these misconceptions.

Care from a clinician they already trust

One of the best ways to boost patient confidence in telehealth is to link their care to providers they're comfortable with. Many patients value their relationship with their PCP⁷, and they worry that if they engage via telehealth, they'll be receiving care from a stranger, at best, or someone unqualified, at worst. Assuring them that their care will be delivered by their own doctor—or another clinician within their trusted network—goes a long way to building patient confidence.

By linking telehealth with the patient's PCP, patients are also assured that any follow-up visits for their current condition—as well as visits for different issues in the future—will flow along their continuum of care.⁸ Patients can also be confident that their medical history will be considered when their telehealth provider creates the treatment plan.





Evidence-based care

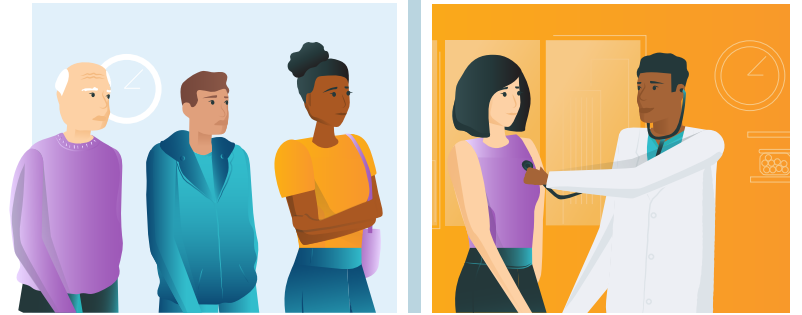
Patients and providers agree that an evidence-based approach delivers the best treatment outcomes. In fact, patients rank evidence-based treatment above their own treatment preferences.⁹ This demonstrates that they understand the value of decades of research and collaboration physicians bring to the table.

Telehealth provides a unique opportunity to deliver evidence-based care consistently. Once a patient has input current information about their symptoms and health history, virtual visit software can help the provider determine a diagnosis, creation, and delivery of an evidence-based treatment plan that optimizes patient outcomes. The provider's time is best spent reviewing the plan and ensuring that the patient is getting quick, effective, evidence-based care.

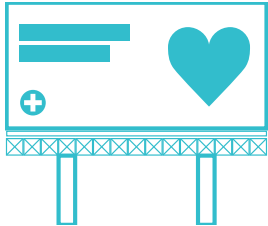
Educating your patients that your telehealth offering delivers evidence-based care will help them see that the treatment they receive will be determined by the most up-to-date, accurate, and comprehensive data available, and that it will be reviewed and delivered by a thoughtful practitioner who has the patient's best interest at heart.

Part 3: Treat every patient interaction as an opportunity for engagement.

When it comes to educating patients about telehealth, the obvious forms of marketing and advertising come to mind: billboards, radio spots, pamphlets and posters in lobbies and waiting rooms. These are all great ways to build awareness of your virtual care offerings! But often, the best ways to get patients to actually try telehealth are far more grassroots.

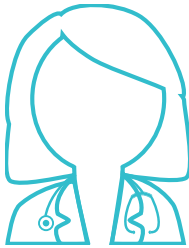


Patient Touchpoints



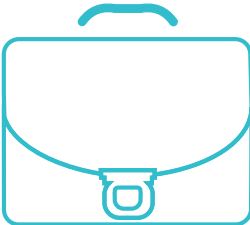
Marketing

Social | Search
Email | Video



Clinical

Drs | NPs | MA
Nurse Line



Administrative

Check-in / Check-out
Scheduler | Call Center
Coverage Benefits



Online

Portal | Email
Referrals

As we can see in the graphic to the left, marketing only provides a few channels for patient communication, while opportunities within the organization are numerous—and many of them are free!

Administrative

Administrative staff are often the first point of contact between a healthcare provider and a patient. When a patient calls to make an appointment with a doctor and explains his or her symptoms, the scheduler or person taking the call can suggest the patient seek virtual care rather than waiting to come into the office. Call center employees can also recommend telehealth, as can people answering queries about benefits coverage. Building this into their workflow would make it a habit.



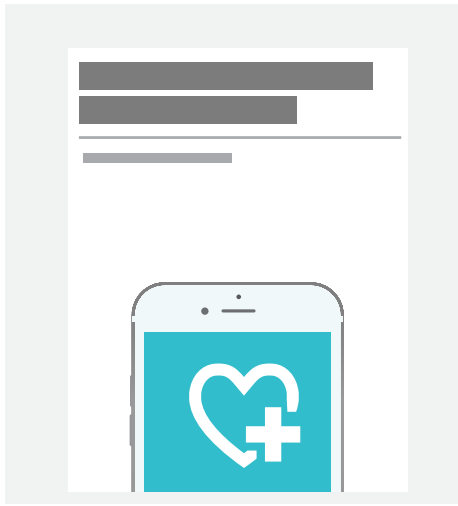
Once a patient is in the office, the person checking them in and/or out can recommend telehealth for the next time that patient needs care. This also provides a great opportunity to hand patients pamphlets or other printed materials promoting the use of virtual care.

Clinical

Put simply: there is no one a patient trusts more with their health than their doctor, followed closely by the other healthcare professionals—medical assistants, nurses, and nurse practitioners—who work in their doctor’s office. A recommendation to try telehealth from one of these trusted professionals can have a huge impact on patient behavior. And that recommendation comes naturally if the patient is seeing the doctor for a condition or symptoms that could be easily addressed through virtual care, like a cold, UTI, or ear ache.

Giving clinicians a pamphlet or placard to refer to during the conversation about telehealth can aid the conversation and build credibility for the virtual care solution they are recommending.





Online

One of the most effective—even though it is slightly less personal—ways to encourage patients to use virtual care is through digital channels like the patient portal and email campaigns. Often, a tech-savvy patient will use the patient portal to schedule an appointment with their doctor. If they see that virtual care is available to them, and the steps to engage with it are simple, they are far more likely to use it.

As we discussed in part two, email campaigns are an effective way to reach out to patients, especially if you are strategic about which topics you send to specific segments of those patients. Seasonal campaigns can engage patients with telehealth as well. For example, patients who receive notification that they can use virtual health during cold and flu season will be happy to get care from the comfort of their own home (or bed, depending on the severity of the illness). Even better, those who are still contagious won't expose other patients to the virus if they seek virtual care from home rather than at the doctor's office.

Referrals and recommendations

Most patients who use telehealth report high satisfaction. And, as we discussed in part one, happy patients like to tell their friends and family about their positive experience. Almost every touchpoint we outlined above provides an opportunity to ask for referrals to other patients. If the topic of telehealth comes up with a doctor, nurse, scheduler, or receptionist and the patient says they have already used it, that is a perfect time to ask them if they have told other people about it.





Having a smart telehealth strategy for your system is table stakes. Telehealth benefits patients, clinicians, and healthcare delivery systems in several ways:

- Improved health outcomes for both individuals and populations
- Increased loyalty to providers
- Reduced clinician burnout by allowing physicians to focus on the patient, not paperwork
- Boost to the bottom line of healthcare systems.

But implementing a virtual care platform is only the beginning. Success depends on more than simply building it and expecting them to come. Educating and encouraging clinicians and patients to use virtual care ensures triple aim goals are met and—often—exceeded.

Endnotes

- 1 77% of Patients Want Access to Virtual Care, Telehealth; patientengagementhit.com, June 2017
- 2 Black Book Market Research, July 2018
- 3 Advisory Board, June 2017
- 4 What Do Patients, Consumers Want in Digital Health Tools?; patientengagementhit.com; July 2018
- 5 Why telemedicine has been such a bust so far; cnbc.com, June 2018
- 6 Why Hasn't Telemedicine Taken Off? Hey, Blame This Guy.; [Forbes](http://Forbes.com), July 2018
- 7 Consumers Say Patient-Provider Relationship Key to Quality Care; patientengagementhit.com, November 2017
- 8 What Role Does EHR Software Play in Telemedicine?; Advanced Data Systems Corporation, January 2017
- 9 Consumers Say Patient-Provider Relationship Key to Quality Care; patientengagementhit.com, November 2017

The logo for Bright.MD, featuring the text "BRIGHT.MD" in white, uppercase letters on a teal rectangular background. A small orange dot is positioned above the letter "I" in "BRIGHT" and another small orange dot is positioned above the letter "M" in "MD".

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Bright.md is a venture-backed, privately held company based in Portland, Oregon focused on positively transforming healthcare delivery for stakeholders on both sides of care, including leading health systems in North America.

Since its founding in 2014, Bright.md has stayed tightly focused on its mission to modernize healthcare; generate savings to the overall cost of care; provide high-quality, evidence-based, convenient care for patients; and automate tedious documentation for clinicians.

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