Flexible, Scalable Telehealth with Amwell Now: Two Health Systems Respond to COVID-19

OVERVIEW

COVID-19 has tested healthcare providers as never before. To limit the spread of the virus and preserve continuity of care, health systems across the country have transitioned essential and routine care from brick-and-mortar facilities to telehealth in massive volumes, and at record speed. This unprecedented shift created new challenges for health systems, physicians, and patients, many of whom were navigating virtual care for the first time.

For years before COVID-19, Amwell's enterprise telehealth solutions had emphasized customization, data security, and seamless integration with EHRs and clinical workflows. While those elements have remained as important as ever, the pandemic has also created an urgent need for seamless, easy-to-use video connectivity for patients and providers.

In response to this need, Amwell developed Amwell Now, a lightweight, intuitive, and secure solution for video visits that prioritizes simple connectivity and rapid implementation. Many of the nation's leading health systems, including Indiana University Health and Baystate Health, have since deployed Amwell Now to scale their telehealth operations across the enterprise and ensure their continued ability to deliver high-quality care to their patients during the pandemic.

Indiana University Health | Baystate Health

Empowering Providers through Amwell Now

IU Health had been building and growing its telehealth infrastructure for years. When COVID-19 hit, the health system had to mobilize video visits at an unprecedented scale.

IU Health, a strategic partner of Amwell's, had broadly implemented Amwell's platform across the enterprise. Prior to the pandemic, the health system leveraged Amwell technology for on-demand urgent care, scheduled visits through Amwell's integration with Cerner, and specialty consults.

However, when COVID-19 hit, a massive influx of providers, many of whom were new to video visits, suddenly needed to use the Amwell platform to see their patients. "Because our providers could not see patients in person, they quickly made the move to virtual care," says Bob Geis, program manager at IU Health. "The integrated Amwell-Cerner solution is designed to make the provider and staff experience simpler. However, some of its complexities actually made it more difficult to train and onboard the influx of providers during the pandemic."

IU Health providers looking for a simple virtual care experience turned to videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom and Skype, enabled by the relaxation of HIPAA enforcement brought on by the pandemic. "Our virtual care team and IS infrastructure did not have the resources to support these other solutions," Geis says. "After the initial influx of providers, we needed a solution that was simple to use and met stronger HIPAA requirements. Amwell delivered Amwell Now mid-summer for us to pilot."

Introducing IU Health

IU Health, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the largest network of physicians in the state. The health system comprises dozens of facilities statewide, including 17 hospitals, four physician practices, and two trauma centers (a Level 1 Trauma Center at IU Health Methodist Hospital and Indiana's only Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center at Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health). IU Health is also affiliated with Indiana University School of Medicine, the nation's largest medical school and a national leader in medical education and research.

Implementing Amwell Now

In July 2020, IU Health became one of the first health systems to implement Amwell Now. The health system began by offering Amwell Now to its primary care physicians, and has since expanded to the entire IU Health Physicians (IUHP) group, from endocrinology to pediatrics. IU Health has also onboarded clinical support staff and schedulers to create a seamless patient experience.

Key Features for IU Health

Simple and reliable. IU Health providers responded positively to the sheer simplicity and reliability of Amwell Now.

Self-activation. IU Health's virtual care committee developed a list of must-haves for its virtual care platform, and self-service was high on the list. This included a seamless sign-up experience for providers and minimal support associated with maintaining a provider account. "It seems very simple, but the fact that providers and other team members can easily reset their own password and don't have to go to an outside source was really important," says April Powell, MPH, program manager of virtual care at IU Health.

Screensharing. The ability to show patients diagnostic images, test results, and more from the physician's computer has been critical as virtual care has expanded during COVID-19.

Guest invite options. Amwell Now enables providers to easily invite other people (including family members, interpreters, and other providers) to the visit.

Simple scheduling. Amwell Now allows schedulers to simply ask patients for their phone number, and a visit link is then automatically sent to that phone number through SMS text.

Staff support. Because medical assistants have the same Amwell Now account type as providers, it is easy to help their providers when needed. This includes checking-in on the patient before the provider joins the virtual visit.

Due to Amwell Now's intuitive design, very little troubleshooting was required as the IU Health virtual care team onboarded their staff. The team distributed Amwell's provider and patient manuals, and did 15-minute demos for providers. Because the platform is easy for providers to navigate, IU Health was able to onboard a large number of providers very quickly.

Amwell Now adoption exploded among IU Health providers, especially as COVID-19 cases began to peak again in the fall. In October 2020 alone, IU Health completed 7,400 Amwell Now visits and volume has continued to grow. When combined with other direct-to-consumer Amwell visits, IU Health did more than 17,000 virtual visits in October 2020 — a significant year-over-year increase.

IU Health Amwell Now Visit Growth

+152%

Sept 20   Oct 20
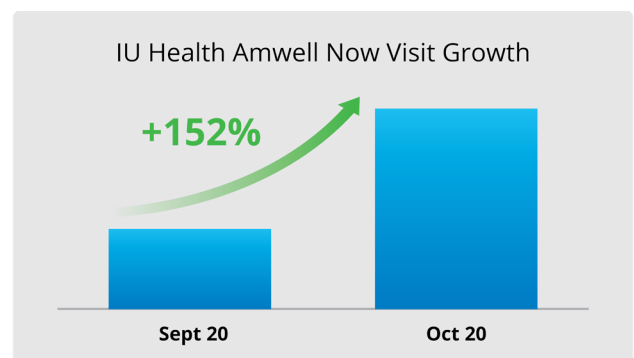
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A Seamless Provider Experience

As the need for telehealth skyrocketed, Baystate Health in Massachusetts had to provide new tools and additional support to its care teams.

Since April 2018, Baystate Health has used the Amwell platform to conduct scheduled video visits through their white-label application, BH Connect. Baystate Health was also using Amwell telemedicine carts and technology for inpatient care.

When COVID-19 swept across the country in March 2020, Baystate Health encouraged every provider in its organization to adopt telehealth to continue seeing their patients. This required that Baystate Health on-board more than 1,000 providers to the BH Connect platform. Due to the large volume of new providers using telehealth, this entailed significant effort from the virtual care team — and some frustration from providers and patients as they got used to the technology. Providers were finding it difficult to help patients download and test the app ahead of the visit. "Either the patients were getting very frustrated, or the providers were getting frustrated. Providers felt they were spending inordinate amounts of time doing service recovery with the patients rather than providing clinical care," says Steve Merritt, program manager at Baystate Health. Because the BH Connect app required a higher level of support than was sustainable when onboarding an unprecedented number of providers, Baystate Health was interested in a lightweight virtual care solution that required a lot less support.

Due to this need, Baystate Health was quick to adopt Amwell Now. The health system selected use cases for Amwell Now based on provider interest. "We partnered with some provider superusers, but also providers who were really struggling with virtual care," says Allie Casey, team lead of imaging and clinical systems at Baystate Health. Departments that rapidly adopted Amwell Now include sleep medicine, pediatric subspecialties wound care, and neurology.

Introducing Baystate Health

Baystate Health is a not-for-profit, integrated healthcare system serving more than 800,000 people throughout western New England. The health system is comprised of Baystate Medical Center, a teaching hospital and the region's only level 1 trauma center; Baystate Children's Hospital; three community hospitals; a network of more than 80 medical practices; and a health insurance arm, Health New England. Baystate Health sees more than 1.8 million outpatient visits annually.

Overall, Baystate Health has introduced Amwell Now to roughly 25 providers, with plans to expand that to more as the need arises. From August to October 2020, the health system has seen its Amwell Now visit volumes nearly triple. Total video visits, including BH Connect and Amwell Now, are up substantially compared to 2019. From August to October 2020, the health system saw a 2,821% increase in video visits compared to the same time period last year.

Baystate Health's strategy is to connect all of its virtual care initiatives on the Amwell platform. In addition to adopting Amwell Now, the health system has implemented the Touchpoint Tablet software, which supplements its telemedicine carts and allows Baystate to use its existing iPads to conduct video visits for some inpatient use cases.

Key Features for Baystate Health

Lightweight. The Amwell Now experience does not require patients to download an app, creating a lightweight and easy experience for both patients and providers.

Simple connectivity. The ability to send the patient an invite via text message, versus through email, allows for a quick and easy video visit experience.

Screensharing. Giving providers the ability to share their screen with patients was a "huge advantage" for virtual care, Casey says.

Limited provider training. To onboard providers to Amwell Now, Baystate Health sent out an introduction email with instructions on how to sign up. They also shared Amwell's provider manual, which includes instructions on how to create an account and use the platform. "There was no formal training and barely any support needed," says Casey. "The most frequent question we received from providers was, 'Why aren't we all using this?'"

"This Amwell Now functionality, in combination with the integration we're building with Cerner and our Touchpoint Tablet capabilities, is going to take the place of all different video tools people have been using," tells Merritt. "We had a very good executive team who is saying we really want to have one platform for virtual care."

Baystate Health Amwell Now Visit Growth

3X

| Aug 20 | Sept 20 | Oct 20 |

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