



WHITEPAPER

**THE FUTURE OF
CARE DELIVERY:**
5 Critical Components
for Virtual Care
Transformation

The Future of Care Delivery: 5 Critical Components for Virtual Care Transformation

COVID-19 accelerated the timeline for virtual care transformation, with consumers demanding a fully connected, highly digital and easily accessible experience.

As the use of telehealth visits and other forms of virtual care skyrocketed during the pandemic, no longer is virtual care viewed as an episodic, one-time-only transaction for urgent care. Instead, it has evolved into a vehicle that supports the broader goals of longitudinal care. We've seen specialists across disciplines collaborate to ensure that patients with limited mobility, like [those with neurodegenerative disease](#), receive expert guidance from the comfort of home. Expectant parents can access genetic counseling via telehealth—with their OBGYN on the line—to make informed decisions in partnership with their provider. And when questions arise regarding treatment plans for complex conditions, consumers now have access to the world's leading specialists—globally—using virtual care platforms.

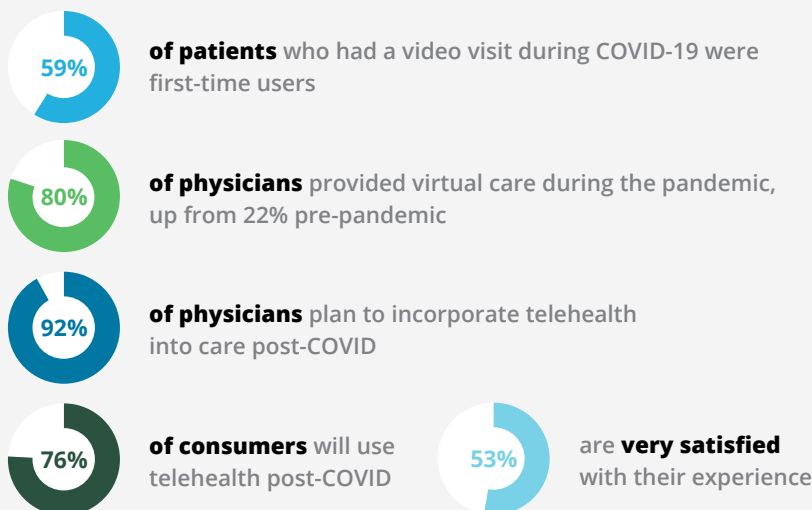
However, while [81% of consumers](#) believe the pandemic has fundamentally changed the way they receive healthcare, virtual access and digital touchpoints alone won't provide the value patients seek. To compete in a post-COVID environment, the care delivery model of the future must provide:

- Easy access to care—anytime and anywhere
- Unparalleled expertise across specialties
- Personalized care from start to finish, with the ability to monitor conditions remotely
- Speed to insight, including options for ordering and viewing laboratory and imaging tests digitally
- Results patients can trust

Here, experts share why these five components will be critical to providing virtual care value in 2021 and beyond—and why they should matter to health plans and employers, too.

No Turning Back

How COVID-19 Solidified Telehealth's Value Proposition



Source: "From Virtual Care to Hybrid Care: COVID-19 and the Future of Telehealth," Amwell consumer and physician survey, November 2020.

“So much of outpatient medicine doesn't need to happen in person. The future of care delivery will depend on access to medical expertise anytime, anywhere, with direct human contact at the right level—virtually or face to face.”

— Peter Rasmussen, MD

Chief Clinical Officer,
The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™,
and Professor of Neurosurgery,
Department of Neurosurgery,
Cleveland Clinic and Cleveland
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Case Western

NO. 1

Easy access to care—anytime and anywhere.

“There is limited utility to the physical exam in modern medicine,” says Peter Rasmussen, MD, Chief Clinical Officer, The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™, and Professor of Neurosurgery, Cleveland Clinic and Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University. “So much of outpatient medicine doesn’t need to happen in person. The future of care delivery will depend on access to medical expertise anytime, anywhere, “with direct human contact at the right level—virtually or face to face.”

COVID-19 set the stage for ease of access to care where and when consumers wish to receive it. In 2020, telehealth accounted for [70 to 80% of care](#) as hospitals and physician offices established protocols to ensure only the most complex patients were seen in person during the first months of the pandemic and, later, as consumers avoided in-person care to reduce their risk of infection.

However, while the federal government eased reimbursement restrictions and state licensure requirements to promote increased access to virtual care, connecting to telehealth is still [hardest for those who need it most](#). Some consumers face challenges with broadband connectivity or availability of devices that support video interactions. Others aren’t sure how to set up a virtual visit with their physician or whether they have the tools to engage in a virtual encounter.

That’s why the care delivery model of the future must:

- Provide options for scheduled virtual visits—including with specialists—and on-demand care
- Make it easy to access virtual care support, from live consultations to online chats with a nurse to audio advice
- Teach patients and staff how to navigate digital paths to care
- Ensure patients and physicians have the information they need to make the most of their encounter before the visit begins
- Focus on speed to insight, with same-day appointments for urgent care needs as well as primary care or specialty expertise

These components enable more meaningful and more complete clinical interactions for members. For health plans and employers, this foundation also helps guarantee that members receive the care they need where and when they need it. And, through this elevated access, these stakeholders are better positioned to achieve their goals of improved outcomes at lower costs.

The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™: Access to Care Anytime, Anywhere

At The Clinic, our easy-to-use digital platform connects patients with medical experts from world-renowned Cleveland Clinic at the touch of a button. Our platform seamlessly integrates with health plans’ and employers’ existing benefits infrastructure, so members receive trusted insight quickly. This foundation also supports more meaningful and complete interactions with clinical teams.

NO. 2

Unparalleled expertise across specialties.

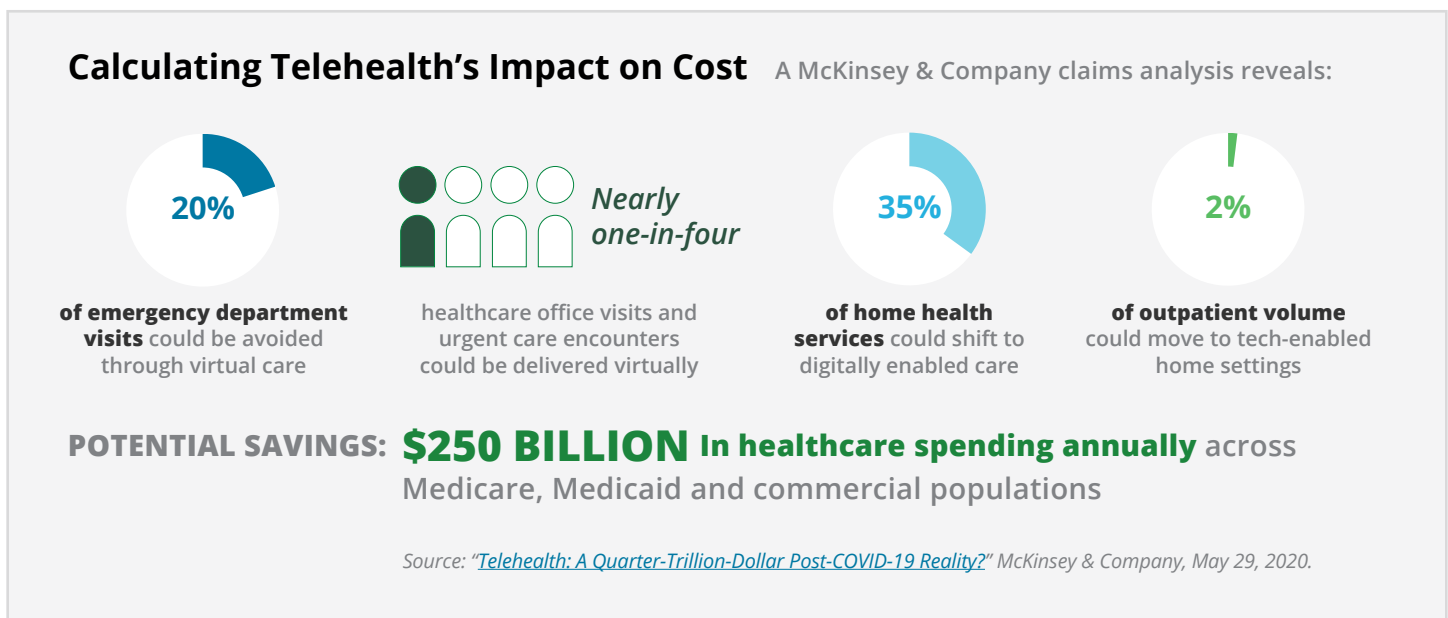
Virtual encounters such as telehealth care have the potential to save \$250 billion in healthcare expenditures annually across covered populations, a McKinsey & Company [analysis](#) found (see the exhibit below). But achieving virtual health’s value proposition demands that telehealth providers have the expertise to meet members’ wide range of healthcare needs. For healthcare organizations, the ability to pair members seeking virtual care with experts in *their* specific medical condition will be a critical competitive differentiator.

The business case for specialized virtual support is strong. [Three-in-four employers](#) say they will ramp up the move toward value-based care models over the next three years. In this environment, **digital centers of excellence will emerge**, marked by their ability to:

- Match members with the expert best suited to review their case—not just locally
- Perform behind-the-scenes work ahead of the appointment—from collecting medical records to coordinating lab samples, imaging and more—to optimally support medical decision making
- Engage patients directly in a thorough review of their diagnosis and treatment plan
- Set up a follow-up appointment prior to the end of the encounter, as well as instructions for follow-up
- Provide digital access to recommendations given during the patient visit
- Check in with members soon after the visit—digitally or by phone, according to their preference—to check on progress and determine whether additional assistance is needed

Given the increased willingness of specialty providers—from pulmonologists to cardiologists, radiologists and surgeons—to embrace virtual visits, health plans and employers should be sure that their telehealth offerings include access to a breadth of specialists.

“Since COVID-19 began, I’ve increased the number of virtual visits in my neurosurgical practice from about 20% to about 99%,” Dr. Rasmussen says. “These visits are supplemented by imaging at patients’ local hospitals, with the records sent to my office digitally. It’s an approach that enables specialists to potentially see patients anywhere in the world using video technology. That’s where ambulatory medicine is headed in the future.”



NO. 3

Personalized care from start to finish.

In 2021, the new imperative for care will be a frictionless care experience. For the care delivery model of the future, that means providing highly personalized, tightly integrated care at every point in the care encounter, with strong collaboration among providers—regardless of whether care is received virtually or in person within or across health systems. It also requires health systems to rethink their approach to patient engagement in healthcare’s digital future, with virtual, condition-specific coaching for managing chronic disease and communications delivered in the patient’s preferred format, from video chat to email to phone to text.

“What we’re hearing from employers is that care is personal. They’re not just thinking about quality indicators and cost; they’re thinking about Bob in accounting, who was recently diagnosed with cancer, and how their benefits offerings will ensure that Bob gets the best possible care experience,” says Frank McGillin, CEO, The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™.

In the move toward healthcare delivery’s digital future, all three components of value—high quality, reduced cost and a superior experience—must be present. That’s what most excites health plans about the work that The Clinic is doing: We’re bringing a level of expertise, credibility and patient experience that has been missing in virtual care.

— Frank McGillin
CEO, The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™

“In developing the care delivery model of the future, healthcare organizations must listen to members, employers and health plans, understand the origins of the healthcare challenges they face, and develop solutions that leverage their expertise—all with an innovation mindset.”

For example, during COVID-19, care is shifting from episodic, face-to-face interactions to longitudinal care supported by a hybrid approach of in-person and virtual encounters. In this new world, healthcare organizations must consider how to incorporate remote patient monitoring devices into care. They must also invest in analytic tools that predict patient risk and arm clinicians with the tools to initiate personalized interventions that protect members’ health.

“The care delivery model of the future will supplement human interactions with electronic interactions, from blood pressure cuffs to activity monitors, home EKG monitors, bed sensors and more,” Dr. Rasmussen says. “It will also sprinkle in direct human contact at the right level and time, whether from care managers, social workers, pharmacists, a nurse or physician, to keep members informed and engaged.”

As [84% of employers](#) rely on telehealth to increase access to care and improve affordability, leveraging virtual care to bolster the member experience will strengthen the ability of health systems to compete in 2021 and beyond.

The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™: Second Opinions with Unparalleled Expertise

The Clinic provides convenient, virtual access to 3,500 leading Cleveland Clinic specialists with expertise in more than 550 advanced subspecialties. Each case is reviewed by a specialist with expertise in the member’s specific condition, enabling members to take next steps with confidence.

NO. 4

Speed to insight.

When members are struggling with a medical challenge or are about to make a major decision in their health journey, they need fast access to experts who can answer their questions and provide appropriate guidance. They also benefit from the ability for providers to digitally send orders for laboratory and imaging tests to centers and receive the results electronically. But while virtual technologies are [reducing in-person wait times](#) in clinics and creating faster turnaround times for laboratory and imaging results, speed to insight varies.

That's due in part to the number of digital platforms used by physicians for virtual visits: An [Amwell survey](#) shows that half of physicians who provide virtual visits during the pandemic rely on more than one telehealth platform, while more than 20% use three or more platforms. It also results from a lack of physician training around how to effectively use telehealth technology and engage patients on these platforms.

To be sure, the rapid-fire implementation of telehealth to meet consumers' needs during the pandemic—with many hospitals launching platforms in just days—led to a scattershot implementation of technologies and lightning-fast training. In fact, the driving factor for selection of telehealth platforms during the start of the pandemic was the ease with which physicians could use the technology—not ease of use for consumers.

In 2021 and beyond, the care delivery model of the future must consider:

- What tools do we need to make virtual care flexible and easy to use for both members and physicians?
- How quickly can we accommodate telehealth appointments—and what types of investments and workflows are needed to speed access to care?
- What training do physicians need to more effectively use telehealth to engage patients and provide an optimal care experience?
- What supports are needed, especially on the front end of the encounter, to promote speed to insight?

“Clinical expertise is only half of the equation. If the patient experience is poor, that is what patients will remember in the long run,” McGillin says. “In designing the care delivery model of the future, healthcare organizations must consider: ‘How can we deliver an optimal patient experience while also supporting high-quality, highly personalized care?’ At The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™, our focus in designing our virtual care offerings is on delivering the best experience possible for the patient.”

For health plans and employers, consideration of speed to insight as well as the member experience must be top of mind in evaluating digital offerings and identifying virtual centers of excellence.

The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™: Next-level Virtual Health Offerings

The Clinic leverages advancements in digital technologies to provide next-level virtual offerings that meet members' most complex care needs, from virtual second opinions to chronic condition management and more. These offerings facilitate patient advocacy while supporting best practices in care.

The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™: Fast Access to Comprehensive Care

At The Clinic, members who seek virtual second opinions can receive an appointment *on demand* and a detailed report from their encounter with a Cleveland Clinic expert, supported by industry-leading, end-to-end turnaround times.

NO. 5

Results members can trust.

Care is only as good as it is reliable. Our research indicates that when patients receive a second opinion for life-altering diagnoses, such as cancer, 28% of patients who seek a second opinion receive a change in diagnosis. When treatment plans are reviewed by an expert, 72% of treatment plans are modified after analysis. Perhaps that’s one reason why the market for second opinions in healthcare is soaring, projected to reach [\\$7 billion by 2024](#), up from \$2.25 billion in 2017.

For healthcare organizations, it’s a call for following evidence-based practices of care. It also underscores the importance of providing virtual access to global expertise when local expertise—such as genetic counselors or physicians who have experience in treating rare diseases—isn’t available.

For health plans and employers, it’s an indicator of the value that can be gained when members are armed with the right medical information. “There are so many instances where quality of care and member outcomes can be improved by bringing the right expert to bear, ensuring that the member received the proper diagnosis and a treatment plan based on the best evidence and experience available,” Dr. Rasmussen says. “If you’re

paying for management of the wrong diagnosis, that’s money that is wrongly spent. It’s also a detriment to the patient’s well-being, such as when patients undergo cardiac procedures that aren’t medically indicated.”

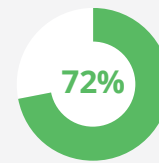
At The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™, “One of our biggest differentiators is our ability to most closely match patients with a provider who specializes in precisely their condition,” Dr. Rasmussen says. “For example, if the diagnosis is atrial fibrillation, we’ll assign an electrophysiologist to their case, not a general cardiologist. If the patient requires an aortic valve repair, that patient will be matched with an aortic-valve-specific surgeon, not just a heart surgeon. This level of precision is essential to providing reliable care and gaining patients’ trust.”

The Future of Digital Care Is Now

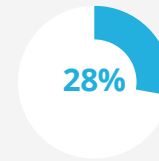
COVID-19 sparked a revolution in virtual care in 2020. Now, healthcare’s key constituents must consider: How do we meet healthcare consumers’ expectations now that the consumption of healthcare has fundamentally changed? Where is digital innovation and enablement headed? And how can we more effectively leverage virtual offerings in providing a member-centric, value-added experience? Assessing digital care delivery models based on these five components is an excellent place to start.

Why Second Opinions for Complex Diagnoses Matter

Cleveland Clinic’s experience in providing second opinions demonstrates:



72% of expert-reviewed treatment plans were modified after analysis



28% of case reviews result in a change in diagnosis

The Clinic’s Value Proposition: More Informed Medical Decisions

At The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic, our ability to pair members with physicians who have the highest level of skill gives members greater confidence in medical decisions. It also leads to better health outcomes while reducing costs.



Groundbreaking Digital Solutions. Expert Care that Improves Health and Reduces Cost.

The Clinic by Cleveland Clinic™ is a revolutionary joint venture between Cleveland Clinic and Amwell that brings digital health solutions to a whole new level, offering unparalleled expertise, ease of use, the most advanced technologies and, best of all, powerful outcomes.

The Clinic works as a true partner with employers and health plans, seamlessly integrating virtual care solutions within their existing benefits infrastructure. Members gain convenient, virtual access to 3,500 leading Cleveland Clinic specialists with expertise in more than 550 advanced subspecialties—all available through a computer or mobile device. Cases are reviewed by professionals with expertise in the member's specific medical condition. Members take the next step with less doubt and greater peace of mind, while health plans and employers benefit from increased satisfaction, better quality of care and improved outcomes—all at reduced cost.

What's more, The Clinic shares population health insights—including emerging areas of risk—with health plans and employers. These insights help leaders craft competitive benefits packages that attract and retain top talent. They also help direct health resources to the right members at the right time, ensuring the best possible outcomes.

For more information, visit www.theclinic.io.

