ALLINA HEALTH

Overview

- Needed to expand telemedicine services to rural hospitals and communities

- Improved operational efficiencies to remotely deliver premier care

- Self-monitor telehealth usage and scale based on demand with data analytics

Like many health systems operating in large, mostly rural states, Allina Health used to face challenges servicing areas outside of metropolitan locations. Allina Health operates primarily at four hospitals in the greater St. Paul-Minneapolis area, but high-demand specialists like cardiologists could spend hours on the road to clinics for half a day of appointments. As Paula Maidl, Manager of Virtual Care Technology for Allina Health, says, "They just realized it was not a real viable thing to do. Driving all over is not a good use of a cardiologist's time."

Telemedicine offered an alternative approach: Allina Health could improve operational efficiencies to remotely deliver premier patient care. Its TeleStroke service had been the first to demonstrate the ability to reach patients outside of Allina facilities, but the health system's leadership was not convinced that the packaged solution TeleStroke used would enable expansion. "The thought was, can we build our own carts and get a software platform tool that didn't have the requirement of purchasing its own cart?"

Action

Allina Health selected IDS and the proposed solution built around VidyoHealth's platform. Expansion occurred quickly. Within months, Allina Health rolled out its TeleHeart service and then steadily introduced other specialist services like Telehospitalist, Telepsychiatry, and Mental Health Assessment and Referral for emergency departments in regional hospitals and affiliate sites.

" FOR THE MAJORITY OF OUR PROVIDERS, THEY'VE FOUND IT EASY TO USE, WITH HIGH-QUALITY VIDEO AND AUDIO. IT WAS VERY POSITIVELY RECEIVED.

PAULA MAIDL
MANAGER OF VIRTUAL CARE TECHNOLOGY

The VidyoHealth platform also enabled Allina Health to quickly adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing intensive care via telehealth, and virtual visits for patients to connect from home with their primary care provider.

In addition to ease of use and management, Maidl also notes a key technical benefit that supports the financial ROI of telehealth: Vidyo software efficiently manages video signals for any and bandwidth. "A lot of a health system's reimbursement for telehealth services is dependent on reporting that live interactive component," she explains. "As long as you had that live video connection, then your reimbursement was going to be okay."

As Allina Health expanded its telehealth services, data analytics and reporting needed to keep up. IDS recommended and deployed Ignis Health TRP, which seamlessly integrates with VidyoHealth to centralize and analyze real-time data from clinical, financial, and operational sources.

"The biggest advantage of Ignis Health TRP, especially during the pandemic, was the ability to self-monitor our VidyoHealth license usage so we could scale and adjust based on demand and need," says Maidl. "But since we've had the tool and been able to use it, it's become a really great way for us to monitor and pull metrics for our monthly dashboards. It's been helpful to gain insights into service-specific metrics and things like what devices people use, as we've encouraged our providers to use the VidyoHealth app, instead of using their web browser."

Results

Over the last five years, telehealth services have become an important source of expansion and reach into new communities. Prior to the pandemic, Allina Health averaged 14 virtual visits in a non-clinical setting per day, while during the pandemic (May-December 2020), virtual visits shot up to an average of 1,300 per day. For telehealth visits in clinical settings, Allina previously averaged 53 connections per day and are currently averaging over 213 connections per day.

"VidyoHealth has provided a mode of care that is efficient and lower cost than having to physically staff all these services across all our locations," says Maidl. "For programs that we offer outside of Allina facilities, it gets our expertise and brand out in the community and allows us to provide very specialized care to patients who may not have the ability to receive that type of care in some rural locations."

Allina Health is now exploring how virtual health services can apply to additional types of inpatient specialist services in their metro hospitals—such as infectious disease and pulmonology—and offering those to regional or rural communities. "We don't have a lot of those kinds of specialists employed," explains Maidl, "so if we can increase their reach to more hospitals through telehealth capacity, then maybe we don't have to hire a low-need specialist at that hospital."

The health system is even excited to try utilizing VidyoHealth for some visual oversight into operating rooms, with a specialist able to view the surgery and provide audio feedback. "That's a new thing for us, it's just at its very beginnings."

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PAULA MAIDL

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