Healthcare in 2022

Navigating a More Digitally Connected World

2021:

The year of ADOPTION

In the past, healthcare organizations have been notoriously slow to adopt new technology, much to the frustration of employees. 2020 threw us all into the deep end, leading to an incredible increase in usage of innovative solutions.

In 2021, new ways of helping providers and patients stay connected, including telehealth, remote monitoring devices and remote work, became an expected norm rather than an innovative luxury. This acceleration of technology in healthcare inspired organizations to install the right infrastructure and security practices to support these new changes.

2022: Driving healthcare transformation with data

As healthcare continues to digitally transform, telehealth, home monitoring devices and the Internet of Things (IoT) have helped to provide better patient care, more accurate diagnoses and improved health outcomes.

In 2022, data and healthcare will continue to advance and adapt to patient expectations. New technologies will be integrated into healthcare systems, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), real-world evidence, big data, user-friendly devices and more. These solutions can improve quality of life, access to care and patient trust, but tackling bold implementation initiatives requires a partner who shares your ambition.

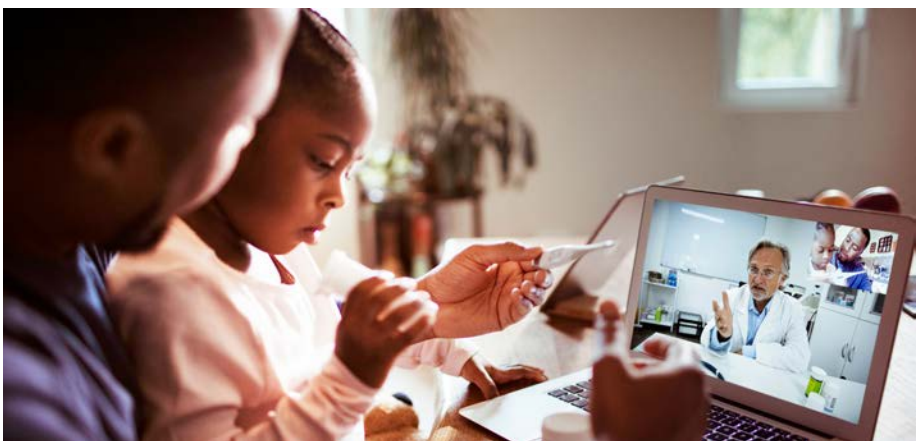
Virtual care to the rescue

Telehealth became a healthcare staple over the past two years and it's set to grow further in 2022.

In the past, concerns over the lack of traditional, hands-on care, coupled with regulatory hurdles and potential security concerns, kept providers from truly embracing telemedicine. It was a "nice-to-have" that usually proved to be more trouble than it was worth.

But when shelter-in-place orders went into effect, providers had little choice but to expand their virtual care capabilities – and do it fast.

According the U.S. Center for Disease Control, the number of telehealth visits increased in the first quarter of 2020 by 50% when compared to the same time period in 2019. The last week of March 2020 showed a 154% increase over the same week in 2019.



A pleasant surprise

In the process, we found that not only is it possible to provide quality care from a distance, but there are also many benefits to virtual care, including:

- Convenience for both patient and provider
- More efficient clinical workflows
- Slowed spread of infections
- Ability to reach rural populations
- Improved patient engagement
- Reduced costs for both patient and practices/hospitals

Changing expectations

Telemedicine has gone from a novelty to an expectation for most patients. They've grown more comfortable with the idea and have quickly realized its many benefits.

In fact, in a June 2020 study, 83% of patients said they are likely to use telemedicine in the future.

As a result, expanding telehealth capabilities should continue to be a priority for healthcare organizations in 2022 and beyond. Providers that don't focus on expanding their remote care options may find themselves losing patients to those that do.

A helping hand from connected devices

Another way to provide quality care from a distance, the Internet of Things (IoT) is causing healthcare organizations to rethink how and where patient care takes place.

One of the most common applications of IoT in this industry is remote patient monitoring. This encompasses everything from hospital wristbands that provide real-time readings to staff, to glucose monitoring for diabetics and "mood-aware" devices that can more accurately track depression symptoms.

The IoT is already a part of many healthcare facilities' daily routine, with providers and patients alike using remote monitoring and mobile devices regularly.

A future of possibilities

Ingestible sensors

We'll always need to be able to collect data inside the human body but currently, it's a highly invasive process. Several companies are working on small, easily swallowed sensors that can gather information, transmit it to providers and then either dissolve or cleanly pass through the body.

Robotic surgery

Imagine small, internet-connected robots performing surgery with minimal incisions. It's not so far off. These robotic surgeries have the potential to perform complex procedures that are difficult for human hands — and on a far less invasive scale to boot.

Smart inhalers

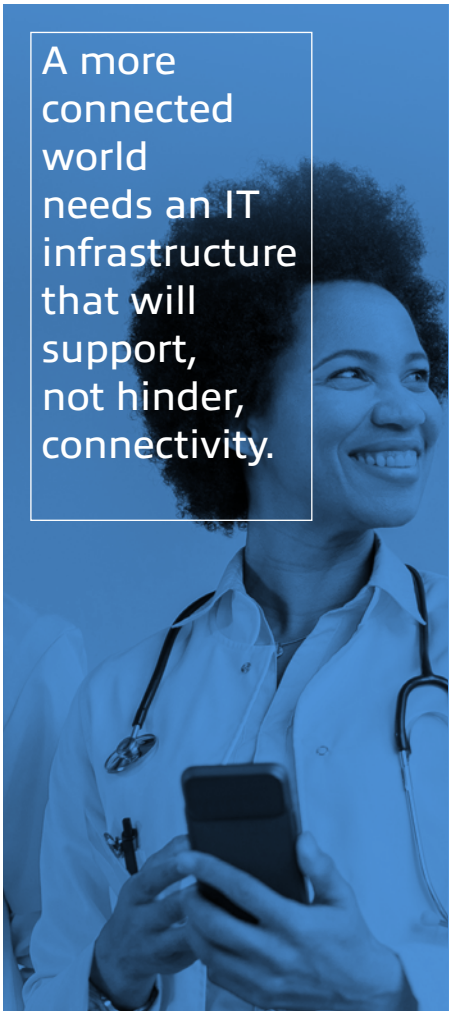
For those with respiratory illnesses, attacks can happen with little warning. IoT-connected inhalers can monitor the frequency of attacks and environmental conditions to help providers better understand triggers. The potential of connected devices has few limits; however, they need the right support to stay connected and stay secure.

The right infrastructure

On-premises IT infrastructure is something healthcare organizations have stubbornly stuck to. Many still have large physical footprints that are expensive to maintain and make it harder to support telemedicine capabilities or a network of connected devices.

A more connected world needs an IT infrastructure that will support, not hinder, connectivity.

The cloud is uniquely poised to do just that. However, its adoption has been met with reluctance by healthcare executives due to concerns (and, frankly, misperceptions) over cost, compliance and data security.



Knocking down barriers to cloud adoption

But the benefits of cloud for the healthcare industry are hard to ignore.

One of the most obvious is the speed and ease at which data can be shared. The cloud allows for faster and more thorough communication between industry segments, such as pharmaceuticals, providers and insurance. It also facilitates greater patient engagement, as patients have an easier time accessing their own data and contacting providers.

Plus, since organizations only pay for what they need, this infrastructure is often more cost-effective. On-premises requires a larger up-front cost for hardware and physical space. The kicker is that many organizations never reach the capacity they've purchased in this model.

Securing a connected world

Perhaps the most often-cited concern when it comes to a more connected world is security. Healthcare data is, after all, one of the most valuable types on the black market. As such, it's the target of relentless cyberattacks.

But let's be clear: It is possible to secure healthcare data in the cloud, on telehealth applications and on connected devices. The right technology is out there, but implementing and maintaining it requires organizations to prioritize security, both in their budgets and their IT teams' workloads.

This is a necessary focus for healthcare because solid IT security is the glue that holds tomorrow's hyper-connected world together.

It gives patients the confidence to use telemedicine applications and home monitoring devices, track their test results online, and become more well-versed and engaged in their own health.

It allows providers to collaborate with colleagues more freely, better reach rural populations and provide quality care from a safe distance – without having to worry about being out of compliance.

Strong cybersecurity is the key to empowering healthcare organizations to embrace innovation.

Looking forward

When we look back at 2021, we can thank two things for getting us through: our dedicated healthcare workers and technology. As we look forward into 2022 and beyond, technology and data will be key to improving patient care and making healthcare workers' jobs easier.

Let's use this new technology to collaborate, engage and provide the best quality care possible.

This year, technology kept us connected. And it will continue to in 2022 and beyond.

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