



Lee Health Expands Virtual Care Platform to Respond to COVID-19

Health network modernizes its telehealth capabilities to screen hospital staff, extend virtual visits to consumers and keep patients connected during lockdown.

THE CUSTOMER

Lee Health is one of the largest not-for-profit public health systems in Florida. The clinically integrated network includes four acute care hospitals, two specialty hospitals and more than 80 practice locations serving over one million patients throughout southwest Florida each year. Lee Health maintains 1,812 total beds, representing 99 percent of hospital beds in Lee County, and is supported by approximately 14,500 employees and 4,500 volunteers.



- More than 12,500 employees and more than 4,500 volunteers
- More than 600 physicians and advanced practitioners in more than 80 practice locations throughout Southwest Florida.
- Four acute care hospitals and two specialty hospitals
- Number of Total Beds: 1,812
- More than 1 million patient contacts each year

THE CUSTOMER CHALLENGE

Lee Health implemented its first telemedicine program in 2014. The health system's foresight to invest in virtual care proved invaluable when the COVID-19 pandemic reached the US. Although Lee Health had established an infrastructure to support telehealth delivery, the health network now needed to rapidly expand offerings to ramp up ambulatory support and address unique new challenges brought on by the public health crisis.

Staff Safety and Virus Containment

Lee Health immediately recognized a need for widescale virtual employee health screening to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. In addition to using telehealth solutions to remotely monitor COVID-19 inpatients, the health system needed a way to safely assess employee health to clear them for work each day. Incidents of COVID-19 exposure were reducing staff resources as clinicians went into mandatory quarantine.

Virtual Visit Capacity with EHR Integration

As telehealth call volume climbed significantly, Lee Health sought a new solution that could be quickly mobilized and easily scaled to serve the health system's rapidly growing need for broader virtual care delivery. The health system needed a platform to virtually connect clinicians, patients, families and community partners, inpatient and outpatient, that easily integrated with their Epic EHR platform.

Patient and Family Access Limitations

Lee Health also struggled with obstacles brought on by COVID-related hospital access restrictions. As an example, virus containment efforts created visitation barriers for patients with newborn infants, especially those in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The visitation access restricted parents, and family members from visiting their newborn. Coronavirus containment efforts also produced a need for alternative avenues to safely manage the growing needs of behavioral health patients in the emergency departments (ED), without putting clinicians and other patients at risk.

THE CAREGILITY SOLUTION

After narrowing down a list of viable options, Lee Health chose Caregility's UHE virtual care communications platform to address the health system's challenges. Leadership opted for UHE based on Caregility's responsiveness, comprehensiveness and ability to quickly implement and scale. Roughly one week after signing the contract, the health system began rolling out new telehealth programs, focusing first on employee health and virtual outpatient visits.

Keeping Staff Screened, Informed and Engaged

Lee Health's first steps with Caregility involved taking employee health 100% virtual. As COVID-19 cases climbed, the health system quickly stood up the UHE platform to support daily employee health screenings, fielding 200 visits in a single clinic on day one. Lee Health continues to use virtual visits to clear clinicians for work and monitor staff in



UHE COVID-19 Rapid Response Features at a Glance:

- **iConsult** — for virtual rounding, assessments, patient/family visits
- **iObserver** — for continuous observation of up to 12 rooms per clinician on a single screen
- **iConsult Mobile** — for bridging the gap between hospital and home and allowing virtual care for patients anywhere
- **Hardware** — rapid deployment of streamlined small form factor carts to move virtual observation to every room
- **Integration** — integrate with multiple EHR and clinical applications with a simple API set
- **Secure** — HIPAA-compliant communications platform connecting all patient & clinician environments

quarantine. UHE enables clinicians who have been exposed but are asymptomatic to continue to support care delivery while quarantined remotely.

Scaling Up to Meet Rising Patient Demand

Lee Health's 600 outpatient physicians were systematically turned on to start virtual patient appointments within the EHR. In one week virtual visits soared to 1,000 sessions per day, with capacity supporting 200 concurrent calls and climbing. The solution offers providers the simplicity to launch a virtual visit right from the patient's chart in the EHR. It allows patients easy access to log into virtual appointments with no required app download. Lee Health's virtual visits are literally taking place from any private patient location to any secured clinician location where there is an internet connection.

Innovating for New Care Delivery Avenues

With limited visitation in place, Lee Health leveraged Caregility's iConsult mobile application to connect isolated patients with loved ones. iConsult was rolled out in the NICU to enable parents to see their infants. Patients in the hospital connected with family members via the 50 iPads Lee Health made available. iConsult additionally is being used on mobile carts to triage ED patients and limit exposure. Outside of the hospital, access to quick "drive-through" behavioral telehealth virtual visits have also been made available to those without smart devices.



LEE HEALTH'S OUTCOMES AND FUTURE PLANS

From allowing patients at home to visit with doctors, to connecting parents to babies in the NICU, to ensuring their community has access to health services, Lee Health has made a significant difference throughout this crisis. Since turning the dial up on virtual care with Caregility, the health system is now delivering 1,000 telehealth sessions a day. To date, Lee Health has found virtual sessions to be shorter and more focused than traditional care visits, improving patient experience and staff productivity. The flexibility of Caregility's universal communication platform empowers Lee Health to use existing resources to quickly broaden patient access to virtual care. Prompt provisioning of software and hardware endpoints allows Lee Health to rapidly pivot and respond to growing patient needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We needed a scalable system that could traverse all patient needs in the home and the hospital, be rapidly deployed, and one that was infinitely scalable for the new normal of the future,” said Jonathan Witenko, System Director of Virtual Health and Telemedicine at Lee Health. “Caregility was able to disperse across all patient locations and has the bandwidth to support our growing needs. We now have a collaborative partner, that will work with us to further expand our virtual care offerings. I feel optimistic about the future.”

As social distancing continues and the nation lays out tentative plans to reopen businesses and schools, telehealth will continue to play a key role. Lee Health views virtual care as a permanent fixture in care delivery and plans to continue expansion.

INVITING OUTSIDE PARTNERS IN

As a regional leader and hospital hub, Lee Health has a vested interest in the success of local physicians. One goal of the partnership with Caregility is to extend the telehealth solution to community partners who do not have a telehealth solution in place to further support population health efforts.

THE “NEW NORMAL” POST-COVID19

Lee Health executives are already considering the role telehealth will play in back-to-work and back-to-school patient screening and testing. Those efforts will likely require clinician oversight and guidance. The health system anticipates accelerated virtual visit volumes as employers and schools dial up testing and as at-home tests come to market.

Caregility continues to work with Lee Health on a forward-thinking strategy that will help centralize and continuously enhance virtual care operations.

From the Field:

“We deployed iPads with the Caregility iConsult Mobile app to be the NICU “cameras” for moms and dads to connect to their babies. One mother with a fever immediately after delivery had been restricted from visitation since giving birth. With the iConsult mobile app, we were able to instantaneously bring them together via a secure text message and the iPad. It was amazing.”

“Many patients either don’t know how or don’t want to download an app on their phone to engage virtually. With iConsult, I can simply send a Caregility invite link via email or text message and avoid having to walk patients through Zoom, Skype and a multitude of other platforms.”

JONATHAN WITENKO, SYSTEM DIRECTOR OF VIRTUAL HEALTH AND TELEMEDICINE AT LEE HEALTH

Crafting Futuristic Solutions for Healthcare Communications

Caregility (www.caregility.com) is a leading global, cloud platform and managed services provider for healthcare communications. Caregility’s UHE solution enables customers to successfully integrate secure, reliable 2-way audio/video into all patient and clinician interactions, with unique workflows designed to fit any patient engagement, safety or assessment need.



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