



# Strategy, approach help WellSpan move quickly into telehealth

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We looked at Teladoc Health because several of the employers that had approached us asked specifically if we could offer 'Teladoc-like' services. The company already had a strong reputation. When we evaluated Teladoc Health closely, we learned that it had a complete range of services tailored to meet the needs of hospitals and health systems.

**Kyle Letner,**  
Director of Connected Health,  
WellSpan Health

**WellSpan Health launched its first on-demand telehealth program that patients could access directly; at the same time it was separately upgrading its electronic health record (EHR) system.**

WellSpan did not plan for the projects to overlap, but quickly emerging local demand for telehealth services compelled the regional, integrated health system that serves south-central Pennsylvania to act. Other hospitals may not have the same internal and market pressures that WellSpan faced, but they can benefit by learning how its approach and processes led to a successful consumer telehealth rollout.

WellSpan Health now had two major strategic initiatives to manage. If the organization's leaders and staff didn't buy into the consumer telehealth program, WellSpan risked burn-out for its physicians and management. Its approach to planning and implementation led to success. A 20-member, multidisciplinary project team, active executive advocacy, and frequent communication to the entire organization were key assets.

WellSpan's top requirement for selecting a partner was finding one that had both the flexibility and the services to fit the organization's strategy.

## **Patients guide the program, communication paves rollout**

When designing its program, WellSpan was guided by its observations on what patients wanted.

"Because of the influence of consumerism, we wanted to design a program that provided care to patients the way they wanted to be cared for," says Letner.

Therefore, one of the tasks the telehealth team faced was to align expectations throughout the organization to develop a consumer-focused program patients would embrace. Executive sponsorship, led by Dr. Thomas R. McGann, was very helpful.

"Communication was the key to success," says Letner. "We communicated to all stakeholders early and often why consumer telehealth services are important and why we needed to offer them. By the time we completed the planning and design process, everyone felt really invested."



Another way the telehealth team got the organizational acceptance and support they needed was their approach of trying to minimize any extra, ongoing effort that would be required of the staff. Teladoc Health proved to be an ideal partner because it offers a platform with more than 300 configurations to support multiple use cases, which gives hospitals and health systems the flexibility to tailor telehealth programs to their organizational strategies.

**“ We were already interested in telehealth and saw the growing influence of consumerism on health care. Then local employers began approaching us and asking if we could offer some services to enhance their employee health plans. We did more research into our local market and concluded that offering consumer telehealth services was necessary to ensure our services are as easy to use as possible for our patients and the communities we serve.**

**Kyle Letner, Director of Connected Health, WellSpan Health**

Each Teladoc Health client receives its own instance of the platform; the cloud-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) technology ultimately complements each system's brand and requirements. The offering includes more than a technology platform for conducting telehealth visits. Teladoc Health also provides strategy and implementation services, 24/7/365 technical support for patients and providers, mobile applications for both patients and providers, and marketing support to help organizations generate awareness and increase telehealth program registration and utilization within their patient population. Teladoc Health offers a network of licensed providers that hospitals and health systems can use instead of—or in addition to—their own.

"Teladoc Health didn't require us to sign up for practice areas and other services we didn't want, says Letner. They made it easy for us to dip our toes in the water while we learned about managing a consumer telehealth program. We didn't have to get services that were bare bones, and we didn't have to buy a Ferrari, either. We could grow our investment in these services at our own pace."

### **Strong start, smooth scaling**

WellSpan Health began offering telehealth services to the 26,000 employees and their families on its own health plan, then began offering group plans to employers. These steps are precursors to offering direct-to-consumer (DTC) services to the general public. Teladoc Health is an ideal partner, because it provides care covered by 450 medical subspecialties. Teladoc Health has more than 23 million members and serves more patients than any other telehealth services provider.

WellSpan's most important telehealth program goals were to learn, improve and position itself for a more consumer-oriented future. The project was part of WellSpan's efforts to become easier to use for patients, so it did not focus on setting profit and return on investment targets.

WellSpan set a goal of having 10 percent of eligible users signed up to use telehealth services by the end of the first year. "We targeted enrollment as our key metric instead of utilization, because utilization is somewhat out of our control," says Letner.

With support from Teladoc Health, WellSpan began promoting its telehealth program and encouraging employees to enroll. The marketing plan included frequent communication in newsletters, emails and materials mailed to the home to educate employees about why the program is important and update them on its changes and progress.

WellSpan Health's next steps are applying what has been learned in its employee rollout and begin planning a successful direct-to-consumer (DTC) services rollout targeted at the general public in the region. WellSpan recognizes that consumers may not be as familiar with healthcare and its health system as its own employees, so it is taking a different approach to how it is marketing the services to the public.

## Program highlight

# Powerful results achieved quickly

## 10%+

WELLSPAN EXCEEDED ITS FIRST-YEAR PATIENT ENROLLMENT TARGET OF 10 PERCENT WITHIN THE FIRST 30 DAYS

## x2

WELLSPAN DOUBLED ITS ENROLLMENT GOAL WITHIN SIX MONTHS

## 2K+

WELLSPAN MONTHLY TELEHEALTH VISIT VOLUME GREW FROM 41 TO MORE THAN 2,000 AFTER NINE MONTHS

### WellSpan applied three key success factors that Teladoc Health recommends for introducing telehealth programs:

- Carefully focus on plan design and consider low co-pay/visit fee structure;
- Ensure executive sponsorship and involvement;
- Commit to an ongoing, coordinated plan to build awareness of the program and communicate to key stakeholders before rollout.

### Taking this approach helped WellSpan:

Exceed its first-year patient enrollment target of 10% within the first 30 days;

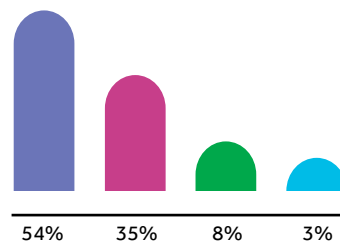
- Double its enrollment goal within six months;
- Easily scale to support growing patient demand — monthly telehealth visit volume grew from 41 in the first month to more than 350 in the sixth, and cumulative volume exceeded 2,000 after nine months.

## Impact on healthcare costs

**\$4.3M Potential savings** for the WellSpan health plan (if all minor acuity, episodic appointments were handled through Online Urgent Care)

If I didn't have Online Urgent Care available, I would have gone to:

- Urgent care
- ED
- Done Nothing
- Primary Care

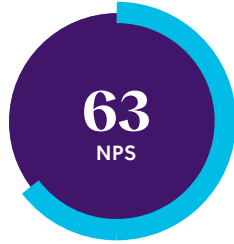


## \$185k

FIRST-YEAR SAVINGS FOR THE WELLSPAN HEALTH PLAN

## Impact on patients

### WellSpan Net Promoter Score



WellSpan sends patients a brief survey featuring Net Promoter Score® (NPS) and Customer Effort Score (CES) questions after every telehealth visit. "Telehealth is a consumer-oriented program, so we thought we should use consumer-oriented metrics to measure our success," says Letner.

### WellSpan Customer Effort Score

How easy was it to handle your issues with Online Urgent Care?



- Extremely easy
- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult (no responses)
- Extremely difficult



We believe we can fulfill our organizational mission to improve care for the people in our communities while also creating more convenient ways to access care through our telehealth programs.

**Kyle Letner,**  
**Director of Connected Health,**  
**WellSpan Health**

### Lessons learned

"What we've learned about telehealth is that it is not an IT project. It is about understanding the customer, understanding what type of services they want, and delivering. It takes a lot of market research, communication and internal change management; the IT part was fairly straightforward," says Letner.

By earning trust and buy-in for telehealth from throughout the organization, and receiving vision and support from senior leadership, WellSpan Health is poised to become a leader in improving access to care.

"We believe we can fulfill our organizational mission to improve care for the people in our communities while also creating more convenient ways to access care through our telehealth programs, says Letner. WellSpan will be the easiest-to-use health system in the region, and offering telehealth is one strategy driving that success."

**LEARN MORE:** [TeladocHealth.com](https://TeladocHealth.com) | [engage@teladochealth.com](mailto:engage@teladochealth.com)

**About Teladoc Health:** Teladoc Health is empowering all people everywhere to live healthier lives by transforming the healthcare experience. Recognized as the world leader in whole-person virtual care, Teladoc Health leverages clinical expertise, advanced technology and actionable data insights to meet the evolving needs of consumers and healthcare professionals.

