



# How to Transform Your Healthcare Facility for a Virtual World

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Since the HITECH Act passed in 2008, healthcare providers have worked to implement electronic health records (EHRs) and other new technologies to improve quality of care, patient outcomes and the workflow in the healthcare setting. While technology adoption was relatively slow, it also ushered in new challenges for providers, beyond the technology itself—how to ensure its use in the care setting didn't negatively impact the well-being of caregivers.

**In recent years, telehealth has grown in popularity, but 2020 has been its banner year. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth usage exploded**—policymakers encouraged rapid adoption among care providers to comply with shelter-in-place and physical distancing orders, and patients of all ages and backgrounds became more comfortable connecting with physicians from their home via smartphones, tablets and computers. Compared to the start of the pandemic, the sharp spike in telehealth usage has leveled off, but it is anticipated standard usage will continue to rise.

Recent estimates indicate that with this significant increase in telehealth adoption, up to \$250 billion of the current U.S. healthcare spend could potentially be virtualized.<sup>1</sup>



Now, healthcare leaders must consider what increased telehealth adoption means for their facility.

**In an increasingly virtual world, it's essential to rethink the physical environment and how it can be optimized for the current and future landscape.** This includes rethinking what it means for the entire healthcare ecosystem—from patients and their loved ones to clinicians and administrative staff. In this guide, we will walk through the process of transforming healthcare facilities for the new normal to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and positively benefit from the changes.



### THE TELEHEALTH BOOM AROUND THE WORLD

46%

Adoption rapidly increased from 11% of US consumers using telehealth in 2019 to **46% of consumers now using telehealth** to replace cancelled healthcare visits.<sup>1</sup>

100%

Prior to COVID-19, video appointments made up only 1% of the 340 million or so annual visits to primary care doctors and nurses in Britain's National Health Service. **UK telehealth companies reported up to 100% increase in visits** since the outbreak.<sup>2</sup>

83%

**83% of patients** expect to use telemedicine after the pandemic resolves.<sup>3</sup>

4,000%

Telehealth **claim lines increased more than 4,000%** nationally from March 2019 to March 2020.<sup>4</sup>

\$559.52B

The global telehealth market is **projected to reach \$559.52 billion** by 2027.<sup>5</sup>

## PART I: DETERMINE YOUR NEEDS



**As healthcare leaders usher in a new era of care delivery that leverages technology and telehealth more than ever before, it will be critical to take a step back to determine the specific needs of your facility, as well as the needs of your team.** Convening a variety of stakeholders with differing points of view should be the first step in this process. Work with representatives from IT and administration as well as a variety of caregivers who are regularly interacting with technology in different environments (e.g., physicians, nurses, specialists in radiology or occupational therapy, etc.) to secure buy-in across the organization.

Engage stakeholders in a discussion about the limitations of the current environment and what specific needs should be addressed as telemedicine usage increases. Are new telemedicine solutions being adopted or used with greater frequency? This will likely require new or additional equipment. Brainstorm areas and ways the technology may be used to ensure that all scenarios are accounted for, for example:



Set up triage areas in and outside of the facility



Connect patients to loved ones outside of the facility



Foster communication between clinicians at different sites



Create new space for physicians to engage in telemedicine visits



Expand remote patient monitoring capabilities

There are a variety of ways telemedicine can be incorporated into your healthcare system, and as you determine what circumstances make the most sense, consider how it will help your organization reach your goals. Can it improve the patient experience, clinical outcomes, cost control, reach and retention, or the caregiver experience? Think about how all of these factors impact one another. For instance, according to a report from Deloitte, hospitals with high patient-reported experience scores have higher profitability.

When tech is easy to use for patients and caregivers, their experience will be better and may ultimately impact the bottom line.

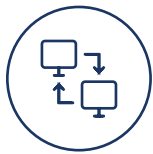


As we saw with the adoption of EHRs, bringing new technology into the care setting brings along a host of issues for the caregiver, one being the physical impact. Human-centered design is critical within the care setting, where providers are on their feet for hours on end in a physically demanding environment. Ensuring that technology is set up to be used in an ergonomic and comfortable way—and easily flexible to be used between shifts and by multiple caregivers—is essential.

**The pandemic has forced healthcare organizations to change the way they do business, meaning change is coming to the physical environment.** It is vital that technology and equipment are integrated seamlessly. Once the objectives and needs for this program have been determined, you can move on to creating a course of action to optimize your space for increased use of virtual care models.

Once you have determined your needs and goals for advancing telehealth and other technologies in your facility, you'll need to audit the existing equipment and fill the gaps with solutions that will make the continued use of this technology easy, safe and efficient for caregivers, staff and patients.

As you evaluate new equipment, consider the key features that will help you meet the goals and objectives that were discussed in part one. Below are some factors to consider:



**Access to multiple screens:** Products that can be configured for multiple monitors provide clinical staff with the ability to quickly access and monitor patient information.



**Height adjustability:** Can the product be easily adjusted for multiple caregivers at different heights? This can also provide flexibility and relief for caregivers that switch between sitting and standing during virtual visits.



**Mobility:** Can the product be quickly and easily moved out of rooms, and through crowded hospital corridors?



**Power capabilities:** Finding power sources from room to room is cumbersome and wastes valuable time. Look for products with hot swap batteries, which are especially key during shift changes.



**Sanitation and disinfection:** More solutions are becoming available that use UV light to disinfect medical tools and equipment. As healthcare providers work to limit the spread of harmful bacteria and pathogens, this feature could be key for equipment that moves in and out of patient rooms.





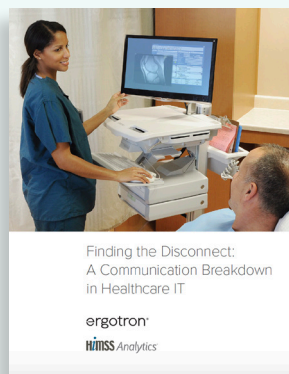
**Cable management:** Ensure that the equipment provides cable management to reduce tripping hazards.



**Service:** Check with your manufacturer to see what their service capabilities are. Ask about options for preventative maintenance and repair, including next-business-day service, to protect your investment and provide peace of mind.



Beyond what is listed above, there are dozens of features to consider. Work with your team to prioritize key features and what will be most critical for your staff in creating an environment that is optimized for the technology and delivering quality patient care.



### CONFLICTING PRIORITIES WHEN SELECTING EQUIPMENT.

**A 2017 study from Ergotron and HIMSS** found that key challenges when selecting new equipment were conflicts in the product selection and implementation phase. While IT leaders didn't prioritize ergonomics and space restrictions in the purchasing phase, during implementation and daily use, these were cited as major challenges.



Now that objectives have been set, and new equipment has been selected, it is time to install and integrate this new technology and its supporting solutions into the care environment. Implementation and consistent evaluation are critical to ensuring this process is successful. Reconvene the stakeholder group to discuss a course of action for implementation. Who needs to be trained and how will training be facilitated across the organization? Check in with your product manufacturer to see what implementation tools are at your disposal to make implementation as effective as possible.

**Don't make evaluation a one-off endeavor. Chart a plan that includes more frequent formal check-ins post implementation to identify any issues that should be addressed immediately.** When connecting with users, get specific, and map queries back to the original goals of the initiative. Some questions to consider include:



Since the technology/equipment has been installed, are you experiencing more or less discomfort?



For carts, how easily can you move the product wherever it's needed?



How often have you experienced downtime or functional issues?

As you collect insights and feedback from users, work with the original group of stakeholders to discuss results and determine if further changes need to be made or new gaps exist. Continuous evaluation and feedback are key to successfully integrating new equipment into the facility.



As healthcare providers move into a new era of care—one that leverages telemedicine and technology with greater frequency than ever before—it is imperative to ensure the physical space is optimized to meet these needs.

**Retrofitting existing spaces and equipment presents significant obstacles and challenges, but ensuring the comfort of caregivers and patients is a critical component of the process.** Take a close look at the physical constraints of healthcare facilities, and as you evaluate new equipment, prioritize its ergonomics, flexibility and mobility to support the well-being of the clinical team. Adding these ergonomic and comfort measures is essential in caring for those who care for others.

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the significant potential of telemedicine in delivering safe, high-quality care, as well as the incredible commitment and tenacity of care providers. Optimizing the physical environment is critical to maximize the impacts of the technology and caregivers.

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