

Virtual Visits in Primary Care: A case study on the clinician experience

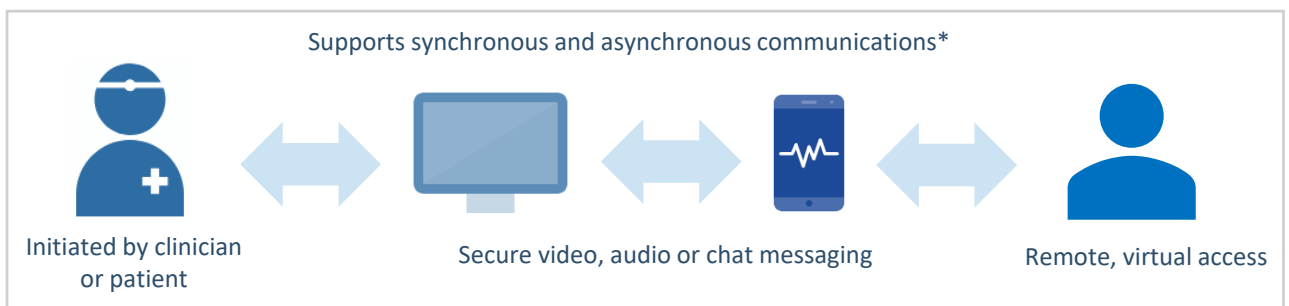
Virtual visits positively impact primary care clinician experience by enabling an efficient way to communicate with patients who may not need an in-person visit.

In Ontario, there is a growing demand and opportunity to innovate healthcare delivery, making it available when and where patients need it.¹ Digital health tools provide an opportunity to transform the coordination and delivery of services, with the ultimate goal of improving health outcomes for patients.¹ Virtual care technologies are such an example, transforming access to and delivery of care.²⁻³

As a core component of value-based care, virtual visits connect patients and primary care clinicians based on their communication and interaction preferences through a variety of channels. These modalities, namely secure video conferencing, audio, and/or chat messaging, complement one another to alleviate unnecessary in-person visits.³ Despite their potential benefits, less than one percent (1%) of healthcare appointments in 2018 were conducted virtually in Ontario.¹

To address this gap, the eHealth Centre of Excellence in collaboration with the Ontario Telemedicine Network deployed a virtual care solution across Waterloo Wellington, to support the delivery of virtual visits in primary care and conveniently connect patients to their primary care clinicians as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Characteristics of virtual visits



Since the launch of the program in Waterloo Wellington in March 2018 until May 31, 2019:

67

Primary care clinicians registered

6.9k

Patients registered

11.1k

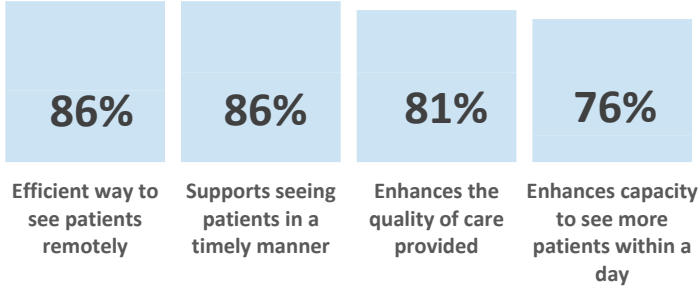
Completed virtual visits

“What a fantastic tool! It has helped me to free up [in-person] visits and increase my availability to patients. I feel that the overall level of patient care is greatly enhanced with virtual visits.”

Family physician in Kitchener-Waterloo

Virtual visits enabled an efficient way for primary care clinicians to communicate with their patients who did not need an in-person visit. The clinician experience survey results (n=21) illustrate numerous benefits of conducting virtual visits.

Primary care clinicians' opinion of virtual visits

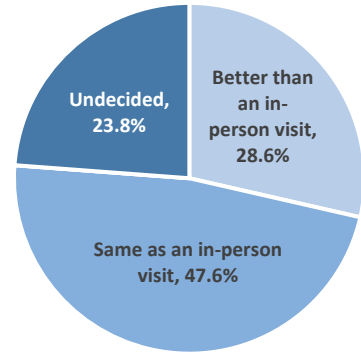


Eighty-five percent (85%, n=48) of primary care clinicians who had adopted the technology had initiated visits with their registered patients. Clinician-initiated virtual visits make up 26% of all virtual visits completed thus far (>11,100). Combined with the clinician experience survey results, this illustrates that virtual care is an accepted and efficient model of delivering primary health care, supporting enhanced patient care and alleviating unnecessary in-person visits.

"I have saved a number of ER visits through this platform."

Primary care virtual visit user

For visits appropriate to be completed virtually, clinicians rated virtual visits as...



91%

indicated that the solution was easy to use

81%

would recommend the solution to their colleagues

"It does allow precise and documented advice in a way that you don't get with in-person visits. It also does provide a lot of support to patients who need clarification or have simple questions."

Primary care virtual visit user

If you have any questions or would like further information on this case study, contact communications@ehealthce.ca.

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Works Cited:

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2. McGrail, K. M., Ahuja, M. A., and Leaver, C.A. (2017). Virtual Visits and Patient-Centered Care: Results of a Patient Survey and Observational Study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 19(5).
3. Jamieson, T. et al. (2015). Virtual Care: A Framework for a Patient-Centric System. Women's College Hospital Institute for Health Systems Solutions and Virtual Care (WIHV).

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