



The WellSpan-KeyCare Case Study:

Expanding Access via a Coordinated Virtual Care Partner

BACKGROUND

[WellSpan Health](#) is a non-profit integrated delivery system with a mission to improve health through exceptional care for all, lifelong wellness and healthy communities. WellSpan Health serves South Central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland with more than 2,000 employed providers, 220 locations, eight award-winning hospitals, home care and a behavioral health organization. In 2023, for the eighth time in the prior 10 years, WellSpan was named one of the [“Digital Health Most Wired”](#) health systems by the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives (CHIME), underscoring WellSpan’s efforts to lean into innovative technological advances to improve both patient care and the patient experience.

PROBLEM

Patient interest in on-demand, 24x7 virtual urgent care grew dramatically during the COVID pandemic and has continued. Unfortunately, most health systems do not have the internal workforce to meet these demands, and as a result, patients either needed to delay their care, inappropriately use an ER or Urgent Care center for a lower complexity issue, or find a third-party virtual care vendor that takes care of them in a non-integrated manner.

Over the past few years, health systems have found that simply connecting to these external vendors was not an ideal solution. “Involving a third-party to help extend the care we can provide to new locations and platforms, such as 24-hour-a-day video visits, is a convenience we wanted to be able to offer our patients, but such an offering came at the expense of a disconnected approach,” said R. Hal Baker, MD, Senior Vice President & Chief Digital & Chief Information Officer, WellSpan Health.



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SNAPSHOT

Problem:

Most health systems do not have the internal workforce to meet patient demands for 24x7 virtual urgent care.

Solution:

WellSpan began their KeyCare partnership with 24X7 virtual urgent care coverage for both adult and pediatric populations. Patients were able to use WellSpan’s MyChart portal to request on-demand visits with KeyCare using Epic’s Telehealth Anywhere functionality.

Results:

WellSpan patients now have improved access to care that is integrated; their providers have connected virtual care team members who can off-load routine visits; and the health system can generate a financial ROI, including direct billing, increased patient loyalty and capacity, decreased leakage, decreased inappropriate office-based utilization, and improved quality of care.

Patient feedback has been positive.

NPS
scores:

69

CASE STUDY

“The issue is that you cannot truly connect with a patient by having them see a third-party virtual care provider that uses a completely different electronic medical record system.”

David Gasperack, DO, MBA, VP & CMO - Primary Care Service Line and VP & Regional CMO - East Region

When we attempted to use this type of process earlier during the pandemic, patients would have to create a new user profile, as well as enter their past medical history and medications – all the time wondering why they had to try and re-document their whole medical history, and why the virtual provider didn't have access to this information already.

And even worse, patients and their primary care doctors were frustrated as WellSpan did not get data from their visits sent back into our system in a usable way.”

WellSpan knew they had to figure out how to expand access to on-demand virtual urgent care, as their own providers were overworked, and [studies](#) were showing that patient demand remained high. Additionally, competition was growing, as retailers, payers, and startups looked to [capture](#) more of the urgent and primary care market themselves. However, WellSpan also knew that they had to deliver this type of virtual urgent care in a coordinated manner to support both the convenience and quality of care delivered.

Ultimately, the challenge WellSpan faced was to widen its digital front door and expand its capacity with a virtual care partner in a manner that:

- ▶ Provides a seamless experience for patients
- ▶ Maintains the health system brand and relationship with the patient
- ▶ Ensures robust data interoperability between the health system and its virtual care partner
- ▶ Could easily move through IT, Legal, Compliance, Strategy and Clinical departments
- ▶ Could be implemented quickly, with minimal IT lift
- ▶ Could create a positive ROI for their system

SOLUTION

In February 2023, WellSpan entered an innovative collaboration with KeyCare, the nation's first Epic-based virtual care company. The partnership allows WellSpan patients to see virtual providers working on KeyCare's Epic-based platform. By using Epic's interoperability functionality, all patient data is shared between the two systems, thus supporting a high quality and efficient experience.

“Our vision with the KeyCare Partnership was to be able to offer an easy to use, 24x7 telehealth option for our patients with urgent needs, while knowing that high quality clinical care was being provided in a well-coordinated and integrated manner,”

Melissa Mook - RPH, MBA, Administrator, Service Line Special Projects and Transformation, WellSpan Health



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CASE STUDY

WellSpan began their KeyCare partnership with 24x7 virtual urgent care coverage for both their adult and pediatric populations. The implementation process took under three months to complete, and then patients were able to use WellSpan's MyChart portal to request on-demand visits with KeyCare using Epic's new Telehealth Anywhere functionality. KeyCare Virtualists would be notified when these patients made a request and would then start a video visit with them.

The KeyCare Virtualists could access a patient's medical history from WellSpan, which was sent over via Epic's Care Everywhere interoperability functions.

The Virtualists would document the visit and write any prescriptions in KeyCare's Epic platform, and the full encounter information would automatically be sent back into WellSpan's instance of Epic. Additionally, an in-basket message could be sent to the patient's PCP alerting them of the visit, and the patient would receive an after-visit summary in their WellSpan MyChart portal

“It's the difference between being known and being unknown,” said Dr. Baker. “The difference between being part of the system of care and feeling like you're on a disconnected island”

R. Hal Baker, MD - Senior Vice President & Chief Digital & Chief Information Officer
WellSpan Health

RESULTS

Since the project's inception, KeyCare has seen more than 10,000 WellSpan patients virtually, with more than 20% being repeat users.

“I realized we were on to something when one of my patients had two visits with KeyCare and didn't perceive that he had been outside of the WellSpan system,”

R. Hal Baker, MD - Senior Vice President & Chief Digital & Chief Information Officer
WellSpan Health

Additionally, WellSpan elected to use the “Client Billing” option, which means that KeyCare re-assigned billing rights to them so they could bill insurance for the visits. This resulted in two important benefits: First, patients would have a consistent billing experience whether they are seeing WellSpan or KeyCare providers; and second, this created an immediate hard ROI as the visit fees Wellspan collected would pay for the KeyCare services plus add new profit to the health system.

Overall, this partnership has created a variety of positive outcomes for the WellSpan Health system. Their patients now have improved access to care that is integrated with WellSpan's own Epic system; their providers now have connected virtual care team members who can off-load some routine work off their plates; and the health system can generate a financial ROI in a variety of ways, including direct billing, increased patient loyalty and capacity, decreased leakage, decreased inappropriate office-based utilization, and improved quality of care. Patient feedback has been very positive as well, with NPS scores of 69 (in the “Excellent” category).



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“It was fast and easy in the convenience of our home. The doctor was very professional and knowledgeable. She took the time and patience to answer every question we had.”

– a WellSpan patient commenting on their virtual care visit with a KeyCare provider

NEXT STEPS

Now that the basic infrastructure is successfully in place, WellSpan is exploring what additional virtual care services to next offer their patients. In late 2023, they became co-developers and early adopters of KeyCare’s virtual annual wellness visits (AWVs) to supplement their primary care teams, as they found many patients were not taking the time to get them done in the office. They similarly have worked to co-develop virtual behavioral health services (licensed therapists and psychiatrists), which are scheduled to go live in early 2024. Additionally, WellSpan is exploring a variety of other primary care and specialty care services, from a hypertension tune-up service to a virtual rheumatology clinic. WellSpan will also add scheduled same day virtual care visits with KeyCare providers in Q1 of 2024.

“Through innovative partnerships like this, we can expand the breadth and depth of our capabilities in order to expand access, decrease costs, and improve quality in a truly scalable manner that helps our healthcare system grow and succeed far into the future.”

R. Hal Baker, MD - Senior Vice President & Chief Digital & Chief Information Officer
WellSpan Health



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