



WHITEPAPER

Leveraging Automated Telehealth during a Capacity Crisis

As the U.S. healthcare system faces unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 crisis, it's more important than ever to make the most of clinical resources.



Automation has impacted the way business works, radically reshaping the contours of industries from manufacturing to hospitality. But the sector that accounts for almost 18 percent of the United States GDP—healthcare—is woefully behind.

As the U.S. healthcare system faces unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 crisis, it's more important than ever to make the most of clinical resources. Even before a global pandemic threatened to put enormous strain on hospitals and clinicians, many doctors reported feelings of burnout due to administrative burden associated with EHRs.

Burnt out physicians are more likely to make medical errors, leave the industry, or worse, consider or attempt suicide.

Under normal conditions, doctors spend twice as much time sitting in front of a screen updating electronic health records than they do with actual patients. During a health crisis like we face now, physicians should be spending their time delivering care to the patients who need it most—not typing away on keyboards.

Electronic health records serve an important purpose and they're not going away. They also present one of the best opportunities for automation to make a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The term “automation” may bring to mind AI or surgical robots, and those certainly have an important role to play in healthcare. For the purposes of this document, we are referring to automating clinician workflows.





1 To illustrate this, let's imagine an in-office visit.



20+
minutes

The doctor and patient spend 20 minutes together, 14-16 of which the doctor is focused on updating the EHR, not interacting with or treating the patient.



2
minutes

Total physician time when automation takes on the administrative burden.

Automate Away the Busywork

When the administrative work has been taken on by software, doctors are free to focus on the patient. No looking up patient health history, no coding, no billing. The doctor receives a software-generated differential diagnosis and treatment plan, based on the patient interview, for review and sign-off. The chart note is automatically generated and sent to the EHR. And the patient is sent their personalized treatment plan automatically. And, this is all often accomplished asynchronously and remotely.

Of course this scenario doesn't work for every type of patient visit, particularly during a health crisis. But for the hundreds of low-acuity conditions that account for roughly 60-percent of primary care, urgent care, and non-emergent ED visits—and that don't go away during a pandemic— it can save significant amounts of valuable physician time.



Conclusion

The benefits of automation go beyond provider efficiency and satisfaction. Those savings are also felt by health systems. Of patients who have used virtual care that automates much of the administrative burden, more than 70 percent said it improved their relationship with their provider.

Automated virtual care provides economic value as well. Patients save an average of \$125 dollars using telehealth rather than getting care through an in-office visit. They save even more if they'd used an ED or urgent care clinic for treatment. Those savings are passed along to healthcare systems, given that a patient who uses the ED unnecessarily costs the system around \$900 and adds 55 minutes to waiting room times—minutes that could be the difference between life and death for patients ill with COVID-19.

The patient-provider relationship remains the heart of the healthcare experience. We shouldn't—and won't replace it with automation. But we can use automation to AUGMENT it. Care delivery automation that gives providers more time with patients who need it most, and less on dreaded paperwork and screen time both during and after the visit, can improve care for patients, increase satisfaction for providers, and deliver positive bottom-line results for system leaders during times of pandemic crisis and every day.

About Bright.md: Bright.md is a leading healthcare automation company helping many of the largest healthcare systems in North America make healthy happen faster. With its AI-powered care automation platform, SmartExam™, Bright.md empowers healthcare providers to create a virtual front door through which patients can navigate, be triaged, receive care for hundreds of low-acuity medical conditions or be routed to in-person or video visits. Bright.md has been named a Gartner Cool Vendor in Healthcare, a Vendor to Watch by Chilmark Research, is the preferred choice of AVIA's Virtual Access cohort, and was named in CB Insights Digital Health 150 for 2020. Bright.md is venture-backed by B Capital Group, Seven Peaks Ventures, Pritzker Group Venture Capital, Philips Health Technology Ventures, UnityPoint Health, and Concord Health Partners. For more information, visit [Bright.md](https://bright.md).

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