

# Developing an Inpatient Virtual Care Strategy

*How the care room of the future uses video-enabled care to drive operational efficiency, improve staff and patient safety, and reduce healthcare disparities*



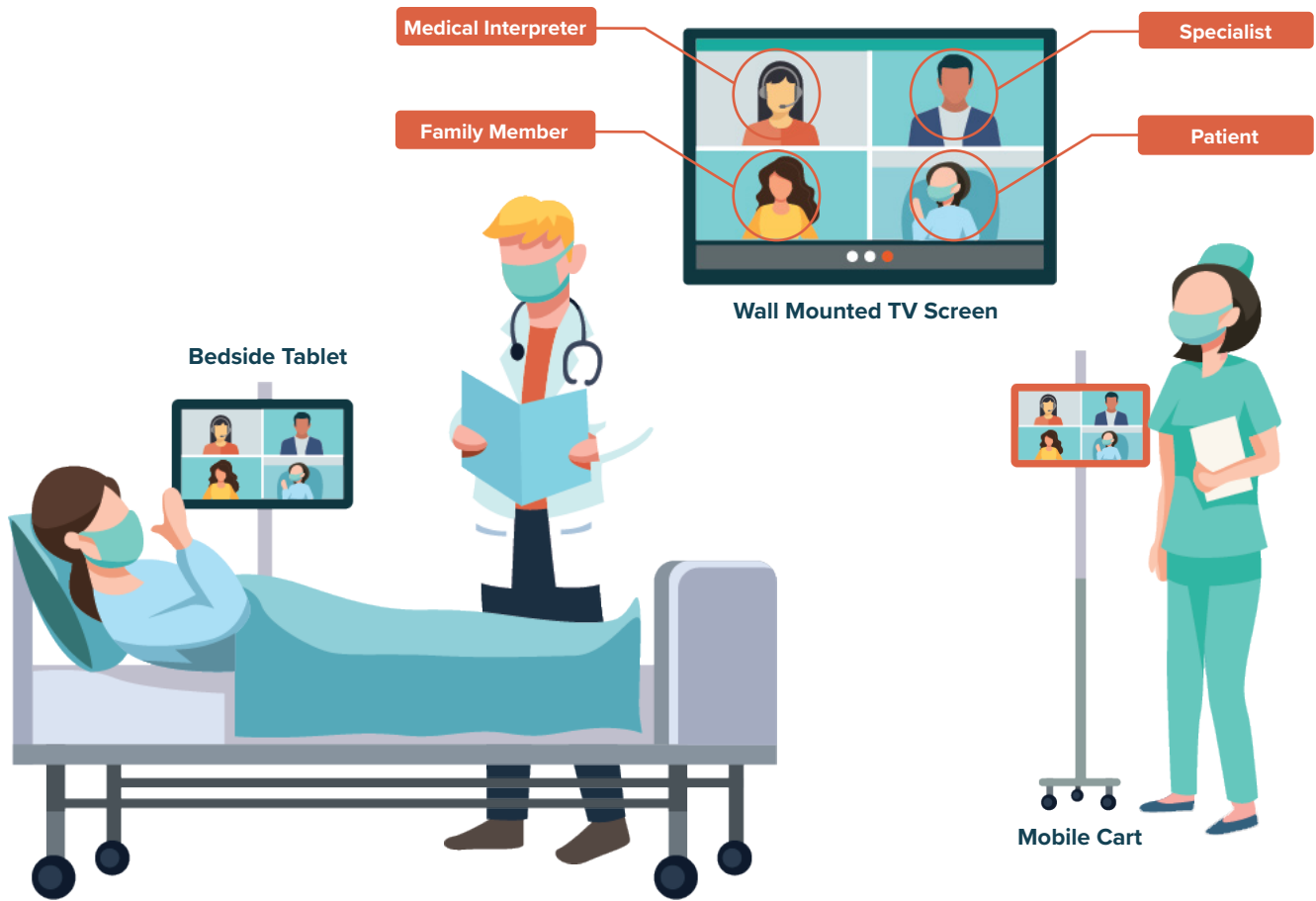
# Developing an Inpatient Virtual Care Strategy

**White  
Paper**

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## Introduction to Inpatient Virtual Care

*The future is already here, and the next step in inpatient care is possible with technologies available today*

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our healthcare system's ability to pivot and scale rapidly to overcome new challenges. Hospitals with existing digital strategies were better equipped to respond to the crisis, and to usher in the future of care delivery catalyzed by the pandemic. Others had to quickly build the necessary infrastructure to safely reach patients. No matter where care providers started, the on-going COVID-19 response has pushed institutions to further develop dependable solutions that will quickly scale to their needs. As telehealth continues to grow, hospitals must plan their virtual inpatient care strategies. Organizations will need to think strategically about the solutions they employ moving forward, focusing on interoperable platforms that easily integrate with their existing investments. A comprehensive virtual care strategy seeks to deploy a futuristic care room that can build on and expand capabilities, rather than replace them. The future is already here, and the next step in inpatient care is possible with technologies available today. But what does the care room of the future look like, how do you plan for it, and where can you start?

# 01 Getting Started with Strategy

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## Inpatient Virtual Care

Incorporating digital resources into bedside care

Connecting remote clinicians, remote interpreters and remote family members to the inpatient bedside, virtually bringing the patient support team together. Inpatient virtual care opens new possibilities for patient care, whether it's interpreters available instantly at the touch of a button or remote specialists who can consult from afar.

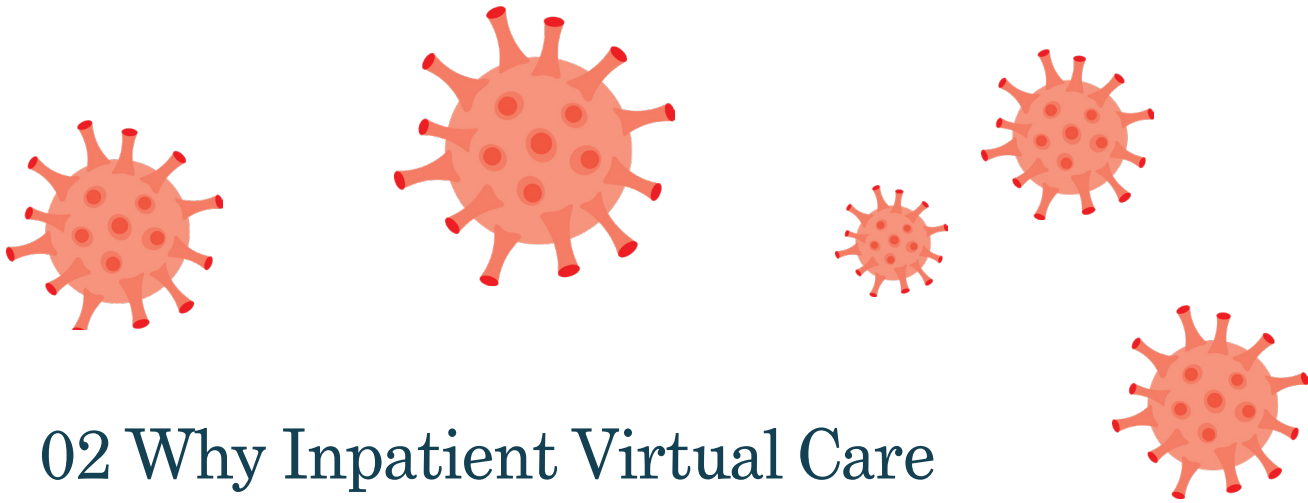


## How to approach deploying a care room of the future

In many hospital rooms, patient resources are limited to the nurse call button. Additional solutions require hardware to be brought into the room when required, limiting their use and interrupting the experience for patients and providers.

Technology should expand the care team's impact, not hinder it. Care teams shouldn't be burdened with managing technology or patient devices. The care room of the future takes a platform approach, focusing on interoperable digital solutions that can enable new care models. With bedside technology that is always connected, services like telenursing, teletherapy, and video interpretation are suddenly possible. By focusing on delivering a patient-centered experience, streamlined workflows like meal ordering and patient education can be made available at the touch of a button.

Empowering patients and family members to take an active role in care means utilizing technology to deliver resources directly to the bedside. The platform approach provides the foundation for inpatient virtual care, enabling further evolution. You can start today, knowing that you have a scalable, secure, and reliable framework for now and into the future.



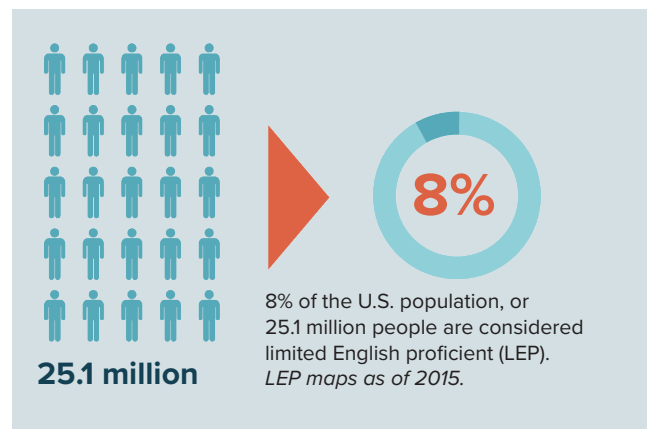
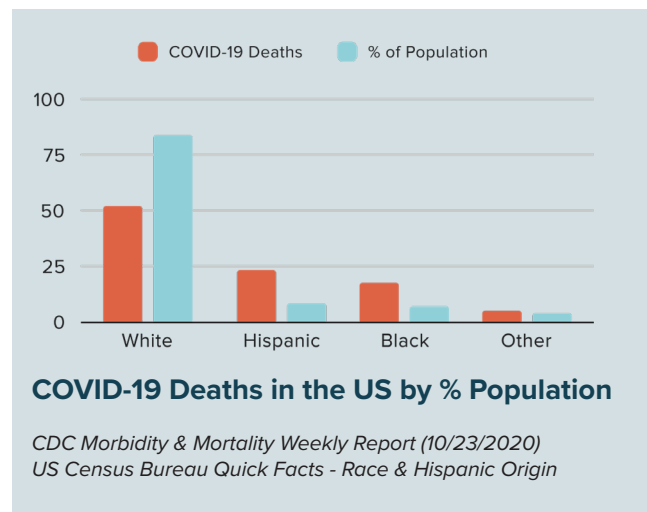
## 02 Why Inpatient Virtual Care

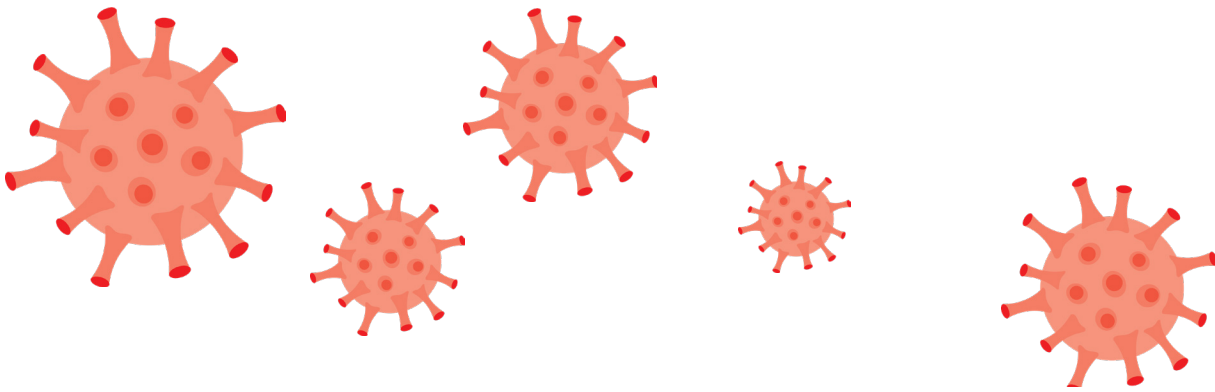
### The pressures and challenges that lead to telehealth

The pressures of COVID-19 brought many latent needs to the surface of healthcare. Suddenly specialists, interpreters, and family members needed to be brought into thousands of rooms across the country where they couldn't be physically present. Telehealth usage blossomed while care teams scrambled to find solutions for a problem they'd never faced at such scale. As the pandemic continues, the industry needs to evolve their stop gap tactical measures into scalable inpatient virtual care strategies. And together, we should be looking ahead to anticipate future needs and opportunities to reimagine care delivery.

#### Address Health Equity

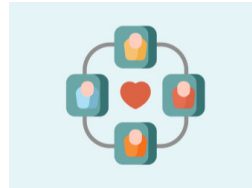
One of healthcare's greatest failings is its disparities in treatment and outcomes for patients. In the United States, this has been highlighted by the pandemic's disproportionate impact on people of color. African-Americans are almost twice as likely to die from COVID-19 (Godoy). The pandemic has also disproportionately impacted populations with higher limited English proficient (LEP) populations (National CAPACD). Appropriately serving minority populations to overcome these disparities requires investment, outreach, and a concentrated effort focused on health equity. Many of these solutions are already available, and simply need to be thoughtfully employed. To address language access, virtual remote interpretation (VRI) can be integrated into existing platforms to close the gap for Deaf, hard of hearing, and LEP patients across the care continuum. To overcome disparities for different socioeconomic backgrounds, patients should not be expected to provide devices. Rather, devices should be provided to utilize digital care. Finally, all patients should be invited to take an active role in their care and be empowered to do so with accessible resources.





### ***Drive Operational Efficiency***

Compounding financial pressures make it difficult to invest in new technology mid-pandemic. That's why building digital care depends on the interoperability of the resources you select. New technology should easily and seamlessly integrate with your existing EHR, telehealth, and patient experience platforms. Enabling the delivery of multiple solutions reduces the cost and complexity of disparate point solutions. They also save time, energy, and capital spent on implementation and training. This capitalizes on existing investments while extending their impact.



### ***Reduce Care Team Burden***

Too often, technology adds to rather than reduces the burden to care teams. Documentation in EHRs is a prime example. With a comprehensive, inpatient virtual care strategy, the goal is to give time back to the care team. Interoperable solutions avoid tedious, task-redundant work. With an "always-connected" bedside technology platform that enables patient self-service and streamlines communication, care teams won't spend time managing technology; instead, they gain time to provide more meaningful care to patients.



### ***Shape Patient Engagement***

Communication is a key component to improving patient experience and meeting HCAHP goals. With technology and a focus on patient engagement you can improve vital communications, minimize length of stay, help prepare patients for discharge, and reduce risk of readmission. By making decisions that directly impact the patient experience, you strive to not only deliver medical care, but human care.



### ***Improve Quality and Safety***

Extending telehealth to the bedside allows care teams to deliver quality care while reducing their contact exposure. This means protecting your staff and PPE reserves when resources are scarce. With telequarantine capabilities, you can also expand observation while reducing exposure for at-risk patients.

## 03 Challenges to Consider

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### **Stumbling blocks your organization may encounter**

As you position yourself to deploy your inpatient virtual care plan, consider what kind of challenges you'll need to overcome when building a care room of the future. Consider creating multi-phase plans that count on scalable technology that will allow you to expand your strategy in phases, overcoming challenges one at a time.

#### ***Legacy Facilities and Infrastructure***

The technology of the future is available today, but it may seem out of reach. While newly constructed hospital rooms feature large television walls and smart lighting, in most hospitals there are more fundamental needs. This gap can feel insurmountable in a resource-constrained world. That's why it's essential to focus on the key opportunities for digital solutions in the patient room, leveraging modular platforms to phase capabilities to meet strategic goals.

#### ***Capital Expenditure***

All healthcare systems are under financial pressure, and solutions that require significant capital expenditure are not an option for many. Look for technology partners who offer cost-effective solutions with a pathway for the future. For example, start simple with cost-effective tablets at the bedside, and plan for a future of large wall displays, cameras, and microphones when budgets allow. When budgeting, keep in mind the aggregate cost of disparate point solutions versus the cost of a single platform that delivers multiple digital services in the smart room.

#### ***Patient's Own Devices***

It's tempting to think that a patient's own tablet or smartphone can be leveraged to deliver digital services at the bedside, and provide the channel for virtual care. While this can be sufficient for entertainment or personal use, it is not a reliable solution for virtual care. Not all patients have devices, and you can't rely on these devices being charged and accessible. Inpatient virtual care must be equitable, scalable, reliable, and secure. You need to consider interoperable technology platforms on enterprise in-room hardware.

#### ***Security and Trust***

Healthcare systems had to quickly respond to COVID-19 with tactical solutions. These critical workarounds were supported with a suspension of HIPAA compliance. Now, as we look forward, solutions will need to be secure and meet HIPAA requirements. Security is paramount to strategic solutions. Having a camera in the patient's room requires the highest level of privacy to ensure patient trust.

### Care Team Adoption

Any solution must support existing workflows to keep the focus on patients and their care. Clinicians should not be tasked with processes that take additional time and effort. This is why interoperability is so important. Solutions should work together to ensure a seamless and smooth experience for the care team, enabling them to deliver care without friction. Look for technologies designed for healthcare workflows; solutions that work together to share context, so a clinician can easily connect to a patient room without additional IDs or passwords; so an interpreter can be instantly connected; so a specialist visit can be documented in the EHR without extra steps. Technology should be easy to use to ensure care team adoption.

### Change Management

Virtual care is a combination of people, processes, and technology. Approach developing your strategy like any new process or program, considering the most beneficial designs for your workflow and staff. Be open to new models of care made possible by technology like telenursing or virtual therapy. Change requires strong sponsorship and morale. It's key to have an executive sponsor who can lead the program in implementation and operation.

### Providers Reported:

# 50-175x

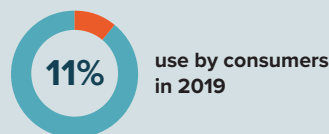
Increase in the number of telehealth visits pre-COVID

Health systems, independent practices, behavioral health providers, and other rapidly scaled telehealth offerings to fill the gap between need and canceled in-person care and are reporting a 50-175x increase in its use.



McKinsey COVID-19 Consumer Survey, April 13, 2020  
McKinsey COVID-19 Physician Survey, May 2020

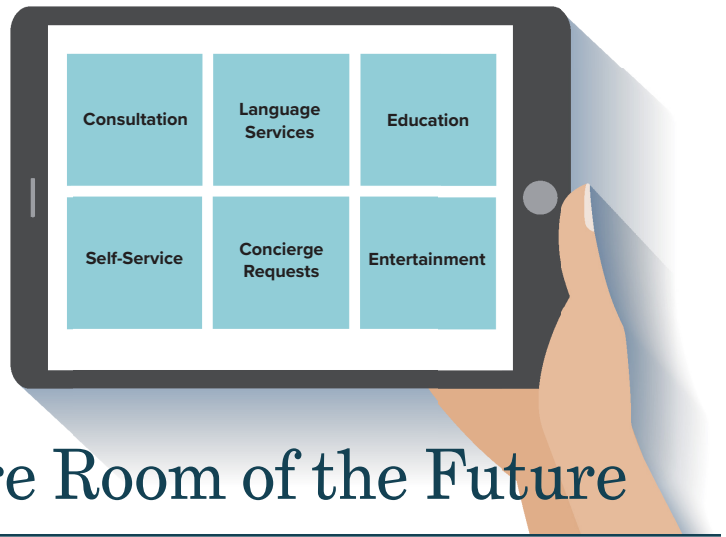
### Consumers Reported:



COVID-19 drove the initial usage surge. 76% surveyed indicated they were highly or moderately likely to use telehealth in the future, and 74% of telehealth users reported high satisfaction.

McKinsey COVID-19 Consumer Survey, April 27, 2020





## 04 Delivering the Care Room of the Future

### What to look for and why it matters

Inpatient virtual care should cater to four main initiatives: consultation, communication, connection, and control. When designing a virtual inpatient care plan consider what a patient most often needs or requests of staff, how patient experience is evaluated, and what factors dictate your technology's ability to scale for different applications. Focus on patient, family and provider experience and quality in addition to technical needs.

#### **Consultation**

Virtual inpatient care expands the breadth of care to include specialists who may not be available onsite. An inpatient can easily be transitioned to quarantine as needed as well, with staff conducting virtual visits that don't require shared equipment to be wheeled in and out. Telesitting is easily handled with bedside accommodations. Virtual inpatient care keeps staff safe and saves PPE while giving patients access to all the resources they need for their best possible outcomes.

#### **Communication**

Technology should empower patients and make them feel like their voice is heard. Language accessibility is key to equitably empowering all patients. Not only should language access be available at every bedside, it's an accommodation required by law. Evaluate how easily an interpreter can be added to a consultation or incorporated into everyday interactions that inpatients may have. In the broader sense, does your technology enable patients to communicate all of their needs?

#### **Connection**

A virtual inpatient care strategy should include ways for patients to connect with friends and family, even in quarantine. During the pandemic, nursing staff reported brokering end-of-life conversations between patients and their families on their personal smartphones because there was no other option. It is important that our technologies are designed with compassion in mind so that there are better, long-term options for every outcome.

#### **Control**

For many patients, the hospital represents a loss of control. It can be a disempowering experience. Technology can help give patients and families more control, from food orders to their environment, lights, and shade. And by providing patients and families with personalized video education with information on what's happening and what they need to do to prepare for discharge, you can restore their sense of control over their care. Confident and informed patients are more engaged in their care and see better long-term outcomes.

### Key Requirements for Virtual Care

- Interoperable
- Reliable
- Compliant
- Scalable
- Seamless
- Accessible

# 05 Gauging the Strategy



## How to measure your digital solutions

Once you've implemented a virtual care strategy for patients, how can you gauge its success? How can you be sure when to continue expanding the capabilities of your care room, and where you need to be ready to scale? Is your system flexible? Do your patients feel empowered? Is the staff burden lightened by the technologies put into place? Look to evaluate the following:

### **Language Access**

What percentage of encounters are utilizing language access? Has this number increased with your additional resources? How long do patients wait for an interpreter? How does your staff feel about using the solution?

### **HCAHP Scores**

50% of HCAHPS scores focus on communication. What do your scores say about patient experience and satisfaction?

### **Patient Engagement**

Review your average length of stay for patients and readmission rates. Look to engage patients post-discharge and map outcomes with cloud-based applications that can collect the relevant data.

### **Compliance**

Keep up-to-date with requirements for language services, security, and privacy. Your technology should meet existing requirements and easily pivot to meet new ones.

### **Care Team Satisfaction**

While inpatient care is designed to be patient-centered, it is just as important that the care team finds the technology helpful and easy to use. Include evaluations of your solutions in staff surveys. Virtual inpatient care should make care teams feel more connected to their work and patients, even over time and distance.

A truly successful inpatient virtual care plan lessens burnout for clinicians while promoting happier and healthier patients. Technology should never be a burden to learn or use. Its presence should always be a relief and an enhancement to the inpatient experience. The technology already exists in the market, it simply needs to be implemented in a collaborative way that meets your organization's needs. Make sure that the technologies you employ work together and support your plans for scalability. The future is now. And now is the time to invest in digital solutions that create a reliable foundation for meaningful and effective patient and provider experiences.

## Resources & References

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