



Lee Health Integrates Language Access for COVID-19 Response

The Florida based health system sought to address healthcare disparities by connecting with patients remotely



One of the largest not-for-profit health systems in the state, Florida's Lee Health serves more than 1.5 million patients a year. With four acute care hospitals and two specialty hospitals, and more than 30 practice locations throughout Southwest Florida overall, it's undeniable that Lee Health has a big impact on the state. Across the health system they have more than 1,800 beds and more than 14,000 employees. Lee Health's recent campaign in collaboration with its county's government, "Together, We Can," is a testament to their continual effort to educate and support their community throughout the pandemic.

THE CHALLENGE

Lee Health needed to expand their reach to safely serve a diverse population

The global pandemic brought new pressure, and new challenges, to the health system. Suddenly, hospitals needed to pivot. Family and guests could no longer safely attend appointments. Staff safety became a growing concern. It was almost inevitable that employees would be exposed to the rapidly spreading COVID-19.

In addition to regularly screening and protecting staff, Lee Health needed a solution that would address their population's unique needs. More than 11% of Florida's population is classified as limited English proficient (LEP), with some counties as high as 35% (U.S. Department of Justice). In Lee County, the most commonly spoken language after English is Spanish with French Creole coming in second (U.S. Department of Justice). It was undeniable that Lee Health would need to link language services with their telehealth platform.

As the pandemic spread, on-site interpreters were removed from healthcare facilities across the nation in an effort to reduce exposure risk for care teams. How could facilities protect themselves, as well as their patients, while still providing sensitive and reassuring care? Lee Health had incorporated telehealth into their care plan since 2014, and they needed to expand the functionality of their digital offerings to meet the demands of the pandemic and their patient population. It was undeniable that Lee Health would need to link language services with their telehealth platform.



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CONSIDERATIONS



Lee Health chose to expand their existing telehealth program with Caregility's UHE platform, targeting employee health and out-patient visits. But, they still needed a language solution that had the same wide reach. That's where Cloudbreak Health's medically trained interpreters came into play. Already a successful video remote interpreting (VRI) solution having replaced Lee Health's previous VRI Vendor recently, Cloudbreak's Martti provided Lee Health instant access to more than 250 languages at the touch of a button by seamlessly integrating with Caregility's platform and boosting compliance across the health system.



"Communication is the number one diagnostic tool for providers and the number one empowerment tool for patients," said Cloudbreak CEO Jamey Edwards. "It is critical to building trust, rapport and understanding. We see integration with Caregility's UHE platform as a unique opportunity to improve access to these vital services for patients and providers across the care continuum."



SOLUTION

A new partnership between Caregility and Cloudbreak expanded Lee Health's digital reach

Cloudbreak's interoperability engine already boasted integrations with a number of telemedicine and medical record platforms. Mid-pandemic, it added rising industry star Caregility to meet the needs of care systems like Lee Health.

"Cloudbreak's proven expertise in VRI makes them an ideal addition to our growing list of integrated telehealth solutions," said Caregility President and COO Mike Brandofino. "We're excited to bring this valuable offering to Caregility clients to support their efforts to reduce healthcare disparities by removing language barriers in care delivery."

Cloudbreak overcomes healthcare disparities by providing 24/7 access to qualified medical interpreters in high-definition VRI. Crystal clear video quality is essential to integrating language access with pre-existing telehealth solutions because it enables interpreters to pick-up on non-verbal cues, lip movement, and facial expressions. For Deaf and hard of hearing patients, if an on-site interpreter is not available, video is the only other viable option.

The collaboration between Caregility and Cloudbreak almost immediately expanded Lee Health's digital reach, addressing their connection and communication needs.

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1000
telehealth appointments/
one day

19,000
patient encounters/
4 months

59 Languages
Served

RESULTS

Lee Health has been able to support thousands of patients in more than 50 languages

“We are pleased to add an enhanced level of language interpretation services to our telehealth services,” said Michelle Happer, EdD, System Director of Diversity and Patient Care Civil Rights, Language Services, at Lee Health. “In a diverse environment such as ours, this integration is key to providing an added level of patient safety and protection. It’s a seamless, user-friendly, cloud-based solution that greatly improves patient/provider communication and patient health outcomes.”[BMG1]

That seamless platform has made all the difference to the team at Lee Health. Within four months, Lee Health used Cloudbreak’s integrated language access to support 19,000 patient encounters. Overwhelmingly, they required Spanish interpretation, but their top language requests include Haitian Creole, American Sign Language, Portuguese, and Brazilian Portuguese. Overall, in just a few months, Lee Health has been able to provide care in 59 languages.

“At both Lee Memorial Hospital and Gulf Coast Medical Center emergency departments I have heard nothing but praise from all staff and physicians,” said Kristy Dutton, Director of Emergency Services. “This integration makes the workflow of the front line staff easier. The EDs are a tough place to be during this COVID crisis—so the MARTTI tool has been beneficial to them.”[BMG2]

[BMG1] As a unit of government Lee health is unable to endorse products or services

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ADVICE FOR OTHERS

Lee Health is now conducting 1,000 appointments a day via telehealth, with no signs of slowing down. They see telehealth as a permanent fixture of their future services, and expect usage to grow with testing and monitoring as students ramp up to head back to school. And they wouldn’t have the digital impact they do today without language services integrated into their platform. Providers can easily add an interpreter mid-consultation, or even connect with an operator to help them determine what language their patient needs. Seamless human connection is the future of telehealth, with access anywhere and in any language. Lee Health recognized that embracing telehealth wasn’t just a quick fix for now, but a part of the broader digital transformation of healthcare.



Cloudbreak Health revolutionized patient and provider communication with the introduction of video remote interpreting (VRI), establishing Cloudbreak as a pioneer in telehealth technology. Cloudbreak continues to innovate with Cloudbreak Telehealth Solutions, including telepsychiatry, telestroke, tele-quarantine, remote patient monitoring and other specialties. Committed to overcoming healthcare disparities and bringing language access to the point of care, Cloudbreak Health seamlessly integrates their language access solution, Martti, into a host of platforms including Epic, Zoom, and Caregility. Performing more than one million minutes of telemedicine consultation each month on over 10,000 video endpoints at 1500+ healthcare locations nationwide, Cloudbreak Telehealth simplifies how providers care for patients, putting a full care continuum at their fingertips 24/7. Follow Cloudbreak on Twitter @cloudbreakhlth.