# Virginia Hospital Extends Patient Care Through Cloudbreak Telehealth

VCU implemented new Cloudbreak Health platform to improve communication for quarantined patients while supporting staff and family member safety

VCU Health™

VCU Health, located downtown Richmond, VA, employs more than 800 physicians in over 200 specialties and has the region's only full-service children's hospital and a level 1 trauma center, VCU Medical Center. In 2019 alone, they saw almost 850,000 outpatient visits. A big health system with a big mission, VCU Health has a forward-thinking approach focused on research and innovation. Their mission, "to preserve and restore health for all people of Virginia, through innovation in service, research, and education," is reflected in their continued focus to overcome disparities and establish the best quality of life for all Virginians.
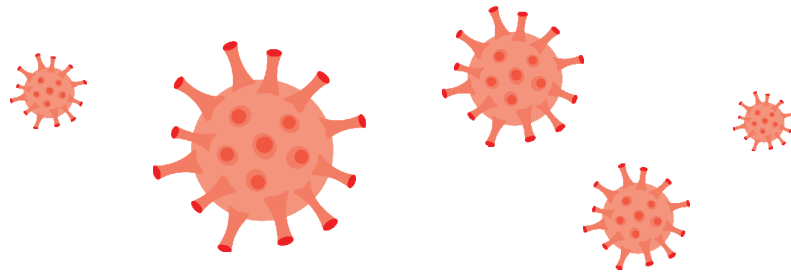
THE CHALLENGE

Reaching the limited English proficient (LEP), Deaf and hard of hearing communities during a pandemic

The arrival of a global pandemic brought with it rapid and sweeping change for healthcare. Essential personnel were whittled down to the bare minimum as the nation tried to gauge how quickly COVID-19 would spread. This left a gap in language access, as on site interpreters were suddenly no longer allowed to work within hospitals.

VCU Medical Center needed to quickly and effectively pivot to a new resource for language access to continue providing accessible care to their community.

VCU has been partnered with Cloudbreak since 2014, utilizing Martti video remote interpretation (VRI) to enhance their language services. VCU employs their own interpreters on site as well, and many of them have rapport with their patients. The Language Services team needed to bring new resources on board while preserving existing roles and relationships, balancing on-site resources with VRI options for a comprehensive language service offering.

This change in available resources didn't just impact LEP populations, but the Deaf and hard of hearing community as well. Medical Interpreter Supervisor Evan Lee-Ferrand spoke about the struggles to meet the needs of the Deaf and hard of hearing community before partnering with Cloudbreak. "A big part of our work has been re-establishing our relationship with the Deaf and hard of hearing community, who have been really reluctant to use VRI." Over the phone (OPI) interpretation simply isn't an option and certain VRI solutions are often found lacking.

At the onset of COVID-19 health systems were struggling. They needed to keep their staff safe, save PPE, and ensure patients felt supported through contact with their providers, specialists, family and friends. Cloudbreak offered their healthcare partners access to Cloudbreak Telehealth, free of charge, to extend their current Martti infrastructure to meet these immediate needs.

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The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing estimates that "...over 1,360,000 Virginians are likely to have hearing impairments, and over 168,000 are likely to be deaf or have 'a lot of trouble hearing'" (Assessment of the Needs of Virginians who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened, and DeafBlind).
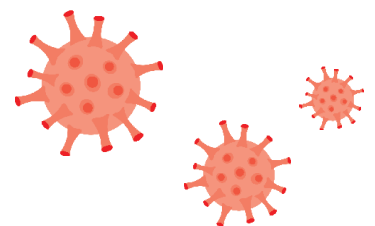
THE SOLUTION

Cloudbreak's Telehealth platform in conjunction with Martti

Cloudbreak's Telehealth platform allows providers and patients within a hospital system to connect over high-definition video via devices in the patient's room. But in a pandemic, safely connecting providers isn't the only worry. Many patients are unable to receive visitors, or in some cases, even see their new born baby, because of COVID complications. With Cloudbreak, Lee-Ferrand's team has connected mothers and their children, spouses, and other visitors with their loved ones by using the company's technology and the convenient mobility of their Martti devices. The solution was as vital in keeping families connected as it was in reducing risk of exposure and saving PPE.

In addition to new Telehealth options and expanded VRI and OPI services, the team at VCU realized they could connect their staff interpreters to patients the same way they were connecting doctors. Now, many of VCU's interpreters are able to safely join consultations via Cloudbreak's platform, preserving jobs and patient/provider relationships while helping VCU better use their existing resources to meet their needs.

"In a COVID situation, when we're in full PPE gear, most of your face is covered. We're just screaming through layers of plastic and mask, trying to communicate with the patient. We were able to get our in-house interpreters access to Cloudbreak. Because Cloudbreak video quality is so strong, you can clearly see lip movement and facial expressions in detail. This technology has made our interactions mid-pandemic more humane. It was a really interesting way to develop how we interact with our patients."

The VCU Team installed Cloudbreak Telehealth onto the 90 devices they had previously used for Martti VRI alone. With help from the Language Services team, VCU began safely connecting patients and care teams making language services an engine of positive change across the system.

90 Martti Devices On-site

Languages Requested **59**

> *"Because of Cloudbreak we were able to increase our digital platforms two-fold... Everything has changed, and definitely for the better."*

RESULTS

VCU was excited to see the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community embrace VRI

In just the first few months, VCU completed over 700 calls with Cloudbreak Telehealth, in addition to their VRI and OPI interpretation services. The tool has not only impacted communication but safety as well. During COVID-19 peaks, VCU reported saving 40-50 sets of PPE weekly due to Cloudbreak Telehealth.

Their multi-faceted approach to language access has been a benefit to their community as well. Local non-profit Here2Hear provides free resources to the greater Richmond area to promote excellent hearing health. To gauge hospital's readiness to serve their Deaf and hard of hearing community, Here2Hear staged calls to various locations inquiring about their language resources. VCU's Lee-Ferrand, answered the call and Here2Hear was impressed by what they heard.

"Patients have been excited that they can come to an appointment and there is a technology that keeps up with what they need to have effective communication," Lee-Ferrand said.

When Here2Hear hosted a virtual town hall to discuss communication concerns for the community during COVID-19, they invited the language services team at VCU. It wasn't until the town hall began that VCU realized they were the only health system invited.

"Both Martti VRI and Cloudbreak Telehealth have benefitted our patients. A lot of our patients were on the call, talking about their positive experiences using Martti at VCU and how they've been accommodated and how they felt safe. It was a huge, huge victory for us."

40-50
PPE sets saved weekly

700+
telehealth calls since implementation

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

The patient experience is an important part of care

In expanding their communications and language services with technology, VCU's focus first and foremost was on the patient experience.

"Our emphasis is always on the patient's experience. I put myself into the shoes of the patient and imagine their experience from arrival to departure."

-- Lee-Ferrand said.

That mindset helps him imagine specific needs like how much space might be needed for an ASL interpretation or specific patient conditions like visual impairments or Deafblind patients.

On being prepared to pivot to new solutions, mid-pandemic, he said "One of my favorite quotes is 'There's no such thing as luck, just preparation for opportunity.' And I feel like everything was prepared for this opportunity. Because of Cloudbreak we were able to increase our digital platforms two-fold and expand our reach within the system. Everything has changed, and definitely for the better."

CLOUDBREAK

CLOUDBREAK

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.