

Overview

Bryan Health, a Nebraska-governed, nonprofit health system in Lincoln, Neb., launched Bryan Health ezVisit as a strategic effort to expand access to care. Bryan Health ezVisit is a simple-to-use, online diagnosis and treatment option for minor health conditions. Offered at an inexpensive flat-rate fee, Bryan Health ezVisit makes mainstream medicine not only affordable but also easily accessible to anyone with a smartphone, computer, or tablet.

Patients start their virtual visit at bryanhealthezvisit.com and complete an online adaptive questionnaire. The virtual visit is guided by the Zipnosis platform. Most visits take less than five minutes to complete. The results are then sent to a Bryan Telemedicine board-certified physician for review. Once the physician completes the diagnosis, a text or email is sent to the patient notifying the patient that the diagnosis and treatment plan are ready. If a prescription is appropriate, the patient selects a preferred pharmacy, and a prescription is sent electronically. If the doctor determines that the patient's symptoms require a face-to-face visit, the patient is provided information on how to schedule an appointment with a local provider.

Bryan Health ezVisit launched in 2015 to Lincoln residents. Soon after, Bryan Telemedicine and Zipnosis partnered to create a model for surrounding rural Nebraska communities, including Seward and Lexington. Each hospital brands the model to its

own community; for example, Seward is "Memorial ezVisit," after its own Seward Memorial Hospital.

"We manage the back-end technology and infrastructure, and our physicians review patient online questionnaire responses. This model offers the same turnaround and response time," says Andy Whitney, director of Bryan Telemedicine. "And it allows smaller hospitals to provide virtual urgent care at an inexpensive price point. This provides rural communities access to cutting-edge technology care they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford."

Impact

Bryan Health is certain that its virtual urgent care model offers significant convenience when mileage

and distance are limiting factors. The timing of virtual urgent care visits are tracked closely by Whitney and his team. Whitney estimates that it takes patients 5 to 10 minutes to complete the diagnostic questionnaire. After the physician on call receives the results, a response is guaranteed in less than one hour or the patient is not charged for the visit. In tracking usage, Whitney says that 80 percent of

visits are from females, and the primary users range from 20 to 49 years of age. This trend has remained consistent since the solution was launched.

Lessons Learned

Open communication with local physicians and physi-

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cian groups was a critical step in the introduction of virtual urgent care to Lincoln.

"We assured physicians the intention was not to take away business," says Whitney. "To remain leading edge, it was critical for Bryan to provide 24/7 online care. We explained when patients used virtual care, it would be no different than visiting a free-standing urgent care."

Another important lesson learned through the implementation process, says Whitney, was "staying the course." Before Bryan Health launched its virtual urgent care program in Lincoln, a competing product was introduced in the Omaha market at a much lower cost.

"After careful consideration, we decided that we had a clinically sound product that was being offered at a reasonable price point," says Whitney. "We believed that our asynchronous model was superior to the competitor's video-based product, so we did not drop our price point to match the competition."

Future Goals

Bryan Health is launching a new EMR system next spring. Once completed, it will allow the organization to better integrate data captured through Bryan Health ezVisit.

"One important aspect of our model is its ability to gather clinical data," says Whitney. "Bryan Health ezVisit is built on robust clinical guidelines that have been tested and tried with great success."

Bryan Telemedicine also hopes to increase the number of rural partners it works with and expand to employers to create a benefits package that includes use of virtual urgent care by its staff.

CONTACT

Andy Whitney

Director, Telemedicine Services

 402-646-8293

 andrew.whitney@bryanhealth.org