



COVID-19 Challenge – Keeping People Out of the ER

The current pandemic has produced a groundswell of patients presenting at hospital emergency departments. This groundswell significantly increases the potential of infection for patients, healthcare providers, and others. Reducing ED visits flattens the curve by reducing the spread of the virus and focusing resources on more vulnerable and critically ill patients. Several organizations have been leveraging telehealth and digital services to reduce these visits.

HOW HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS ARE DEPLOYING TELEMEDICINE

Use of asynchronous telemedicine to triage potential COVID-19 infected patients, as well as addressing other care concerns, creates the ability to assess symptoms and provide recommendations to patients virtually and reduces in-person visits to the ED. This is currently being done at health systems such as [Northwell Health](#), New York State's largest health care provider. Patients arriving at a hospital are being assessed in facilities outside the ED using telemedicine to screen for symptoms of the virus while maintaining communications with hospital staff. This system, as [deployed by many hospitals](#) across the US, speeds up triage and patient flow while limiting the number of patients entering the ED.

Chatbots are also being used by healthcare organizations such as Providence Hospital in Washington state to support out-of-hospital patient assessments. Using an existing chatbot called Grace, Providence created a new version that [provides individuals with answers](#) about coronavirus symptoms without the need to visit the ED or call their provider directly.

Equip first responders with U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved telemedicine solutions to screen patients and assess their symptoms, before bringing them to the hospital/ED. Hospitals such as Mayo Clinic have [deployed this solution to ambulances](#) at each of their locations in the U.S. enabling EMTs can assess patients for symptom severity and the need for hospitalization, in collaboration with hospital-based clinicians, and ensure that EDs have precautionary measures in place, such as segregating COVID-19 positive or presumptive positive patients to help avoid the spread of the virus.

Leverage Remote Monitoring to monitor symptomatic, COVID-positive patients not requiring hospitalization, at home. Remote patient monitoring systems enable patients to measure vital signs, including blood pressure, shortness of breath, and temperature. At the same time, remote patient monitoring **allows physicians and other health care providers (HCPs) to share individual patient data and enable integrated care coordination**, including e-consults, to create efficiency and ongoing communication with patients and their healthcare teams. Both the Mayo Clinic and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center [have embraced these technologies](#) to monitor presumed and confirmed patients for worsening symptoms.

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