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CASE STUDY
DOXIMITY DIALER ENTERPRISE

How Sentara Healthcare Reduced No-shows and Enhanced Patient Experience by Simplifying Patient-Physician Communication

Overview

Sentara Healthcare, a not-for-profit system of 12 hospitals and more than 230 practices in Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina, was among the first health systems to build out a virtual care platform for its patients.

Over time, telehealth has helped the system improve access to care and increase utilization by offering its patients a more convenient, virtual option when an in-person visit was not feasible. To help increase virtual care adoption during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sentara partnered with Doximity to scale access to virtual care through Dialer Enterprise across the entire organization.

Doximity Dialer enables clinicians to voice and video call their patients without requiring the patient to login or download software to access their visit. With Doximity Dialer, Sentara empowered its clinicians with a tool to reach patients who might have otherwise missed their visit.

Sentara achieved its improvements after an extremely fast rollout that was accomplished during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Results & Metrics

49%
Reduction in virtual no-show rate

100,000+
Virtual visits conducted with Dialer

95%
Volume transitioned to virtual care

How to Improve on a Strong Foundation

Sentara Healthcare had already embraced telehealth as a powerful resource for advancing its mission to improve health equity and maintain its reputation as healthcare innovators. Its telehealth services were popular with patients, and helped the organization earn a place in the CIO 100 listing[1] of the world's leading innovators in technology.

Even after its early successes, Sentara Healthcare wanted to continue to scale and improve upon its telehealth program and it saw an opportunity to reach more patients by better addressing patient needs and expectations with virtual care. The organization believed it could increase patient engagement of telehealth by making the communication process more natural for patients — in turn, mitigating the problem of missed appointments. Patient no-shows are a common issue for healthcare providers and can often result in lower patient and provider satisfaction, worse health outcomes and lost reimbursement.

Missed appointments not only add cost to operations, but they also contribute to physician frustration and can impair outcomes. Patients that miss an appointment with their primary care provider were 70% more likely than others not to return to the doctor within 18 months[4].

Over 1,500 of Sentara's practitioners were already independently using the Doximity app to securely communicate with patients and colleagues, conducting over 20,000 visits per month on Dialer. Many members of Sentara's medical staff encouraged the telehealth team to add Doximity Dialer to the platform because they loved its ease of use and reliability.

The average community hospital loses

$3 million

each year because of patient no-shows[2], and the total cost to the U.S. health system annually[3] is

$150 billion

"Minimal training was needed in part because many of our practitioners were already using Doximity," says Tyler Okoren, Director of Telehealth & Digital Solutions for Sentara Medical Group. "We are able to get anyone that hadn't used Doximity before on board with just a few emails or a quick call."

Dialer enabled Sentara clinicians to easily voice and video call their patients, often after patients had difficulties accessing their visit on other platforms or had even forgotten about their visit entirely.

With Dialer's Call Nudge feature, Sentara clinicians can call the patient and seamlessly switch between voice and video, depending on the needs of the visit and the capabilities of the patient. In a nationwide survey of clinicians, 83%[5] said that Dialer has the highest patient pick-up rate of all the telehealth platforms they use.

Catalyst Creates Urgency

Sentara's desire to scale telehealth access became an urgent need in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. The organization wanted additional support for its platform because it was experiencing a surge in telehealth demand and there was considerable uncertainty over how long the CMS Public Health Emergency provisions for telehealth services reimbursement would last. Sentara could not consider anything that would have a lengthy roll-out, or would require reinventing workflows, or necessitate time-consuming training, because its clinical, IT and operations staff were all engaged with other responsibilities.

"We needed something that could be installed and integrated easily and was quickly scalable across 230 practices," says Okoren. "We wanted something that gave providers a text option to start the visit."

The telehealth team looked at several options. Dialer Enterprise had the functionality Sentara needed, could quickly integrate and coexist with the legacy telehealth platform without replacing its native communication option, and had the scalability to support the health system's operations. And most importantly, it was a familiar and popular option with Sentara's clinicians. More than 80% of doctors and 50% of nurse practitioners and physician assistants in the U.S. use the Doximity medical network, and more than 63 million telehealth visits were completed on the platform in fiscal 2021.

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The Solution — Fast Rollout, Fast Results

"The Doximity rollout was incredibly easy," says Okoren. Dialer is fully hosted by Doximity, so Sentara didn't have to install or maintain anything on its enterprise infrastructure. The IT team appreciated the low-touch integration. Within days, Dialer Enterprise was implemented system-wide for all Sentara team members — including clinicians, care teams and administrative staff — to easily connect with patients via secure voice and video calls.

Clinicians have the choice of conducting voice or video visits and can switch modalities during the visit. Empowered with tools like Dialer, Sentara was able to quickly pivot to virtual visits from in-person visits and maintain up to 95% percent volume transitioned to virtual care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dialer enabled physicians to effectively reach their patients in real-time. Plus, making it easier for more patients to use telehealth has prevented untold instances of deferred care.

After implementing Dialer,
Sentara reduced its patient no-show rate for virtual visits by 49%
compared to in-person visits.

About Doximity

Founded in 2010, Doximity is the leading digital platform for medical professionals. The company's network members include over 80% of U.S. physicians across all specialties and practice areas. Doximity provides its verified clinical membership with digital tools built for medicine, enabling them to collaborate with colleagues, stay up to date with the latest medical news and research, manage their careers and conduct virtual patient visits. Doximity's mission is to help doctors be more productive so they can provide better healthcare for their patients.

We power telehealth for hospitals across the country.
How can we help achieve your goals? Contact us for more information.

[1] https://events.idg.com/event-series/cio100-agenda20-virtual-symposium-conference-and-awards/awards/cio100-awards/.

[2] Kheirkhah, P., Feng, Q., Travis, L. M., Tavakoli-Tabasi, S. & Sharafkhaneh, A. (2016). Prevalence, predictors and economic consequences of no-shows. BMC Health Services Research, 16: 13. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-015-1243-z.

[3] https://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/missed-appointments-cost-providers-150-billion-annually-report-says

[4] Athenahealth https://www.athenahealth.com/knowledge-hub/financial-performance/no-show-effect-even-one-missed-appointment-risks-retention.

[5] Doximity Inc. https://f.hubspotusercontent10.net/hubfs/5179062/Doximity%20Dialer/2020-state-telemedicine-report.pdf