



Telehealth Maturity Assessment: *It Takes a Village*

Establishing a successful telehealth program is an important goal for many healthcare organizations today, but it isn't always easy or intuitive for companies to scale a program they've started. For many communities, telehealth is an opportunity to access specialized expertise and alleviate provider shortages. Healthcare organizations benefit from the potential to expand and reach more patients.

Patients benefit too, of course, through improved care access and lower costs, but most importantly, the potential for better clinical outcomes due in part to easier physician access.

For some health systems, telehealth is becoming a mainstream standard of care. According to a 2019 AHA Center for Health Innovation market insights report, hospitals that are working to advance telehealth are poised to meet rising consumer demands for digital tools that conveniently strengthen care engagement. Those that fail to meet consumer expectations

will face growing competition in attracting new patients as well as encroachment on existing patient-provider relationships.¹

But growing your telehealth program can quickly become a challenge as you begin to scale. A complex regulatory environment, financial challenges, inefficient workflows, and a lack of seamless clinician and patient experiences are severely limiting telehealth at many organizations.

Thankfully, succeeding in telehealth is possible and can open new avenues for healthcare organizations.

Responding to patient needs

The need for strong telehealth offerings has likely never been greater — approximately 78 million Americans will reach age 65 by the year 2035, yet one-third of the physicians practicing medicine today will also be 65 or older by then. As the U.S. population ages, the estimated 46,000-plus shortfall of qualified doctors will feel particularly acute in rural locations and other areas where the demand for healthcare outstrips supply.

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Atul Kichambare

*Director of Virtual Care and Patient Engagement
in the Healthcare & Life Sciences practice
NTT DATA Services*

Kichambare, Director of Virtual Care and Patient Engagement in the Healthcare & Life Sciences practice at NTT DATA Services. “It is getting imperative that providers and health plans start thinking about this whole digital consumer experience and transform it from the patient’s perspective.”

To do so, Kichambare argues, healthcare organizations will need to compete effectively with the likes of Walmart, Amazon, and Walgreens, companies looking at disrupting the healthcare industry’s traditional delivery models. Other major corporations are also taking an interest in opening retail clinics and even dentistry and specialty care. These new clinical models combine on-site with remote or virtual specialist consultations, all responding to significant unmet needs within the U.S. healthcare system. For traditional healthcare organizations, adapting to these shifts in the marketplace will take creativity and new strategies.

“It’s important to control your own destiny, or someone else will,” added Lu Ann Talley, Senior Director of Strategic Solutions at InTouch Health. “Amazon Care is beginning with its own employees. But we all expect that model to grow.”

Although virtual care can start anywhere on the continuum of care, Talley noted that the primary entry points for telehealth are often provider shortages and addressing disparities in healthcare access. More broadly, telehealth drives value-based care and the Quadruple Aim goals of improving access, clinical outcomes, the care experience for consumers and providers, and reducing the total cost of care to ultimately improve affordability. Telehealth priorities should align with an organization’s overall strategies and goals.

Once an organization has started developing a telehealth program, it’s important to attentively address fragmentation and scaling challenges.

NTT DATA Telehealth Maturity Model

“As these fragmented systems grow, they result in costly redundant software infrastructure and endpoints and limit the potential of cost-containment savings, overall quality, and access to care,” said Dr. Nabia Malouf-Todaro, Business Process and Care Management Senior Managing Consultant of Healthcare and Life Sciences at NTT DATA Services.

According to Malouf-Todaro, responding to this fragmentation in healthcare requires “taking a distinctively different path than those pursued by other leading health systems.” Ultimately, a three-part approach is required:

- Aggressively develop digital platforms at the enterprise level
- Choose a network model over consolidation
- Generate cost reduction models and pass these savings to patients

Back in 2014, Mayo Clinic CEO Dr. Noseworthy, announced three strategic bets:

1. **Avoid sending patients to a Mayo site of care whenever possible** – “Mayo developed an innovative digital platform to minimize the need for patients to travel to a Mayo Clinic site except when essential.”
2. **Hop off the consolidation bandwagon** – “Mayo invested in a network model that would support their innovation.”
3. **Cut costs and pass on the savings to patients** – “Mayo underwent the organizations process improvement and passed the savings to patients.”

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Lu Ann Talley
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InTouch Health

Mayo reduced the need for patients to travel to its clinics for care and expanded Mayo Clinic's reach to a much larger number of people. In 2018, Mayo Clinic provided care for more than 1.2 million patients and increased revenue by 5.1%.

Excited by these results, Malouf-Todaro outlined eight pillars of the NTT DATA Telehealth Maturity Model:

- 1. Strategic leadership:** vision and commitment from the physicians, leaders, and overall organization
- 2. Corporate culture, state assessment, regulatory environment, and innovation DNA** of the organization
- 3. Process and planning:** business plan, clinical workflow, and provide 360-degree view of the patient health record
- 4. Interoperability:** EMRs, PACS, PHR, charts, and notes in sync
- 5. Patient privacy and security:** HIPAA, HITECH, BAA, cyber security and compliance
- 6. Tools:** hardware, software, and peripherals
- 7. Education:** ongoing clinician and patient training
- 8. Sustainability and success:** KPI, ROI, reimbursements, referrals, growth, and satisfaction metrics

The NTT DATA Services Telehealth Maturity Assessment gives organizations a clear roadmap to determine where they stand in establishing a successful telehealth program. From the Observer or Beginner level to the Champion level, healthcare organizations can work with NTT DATA to identify and prioritize the next steps they'll need to pursue as they advance their telehealth program toward maturity.

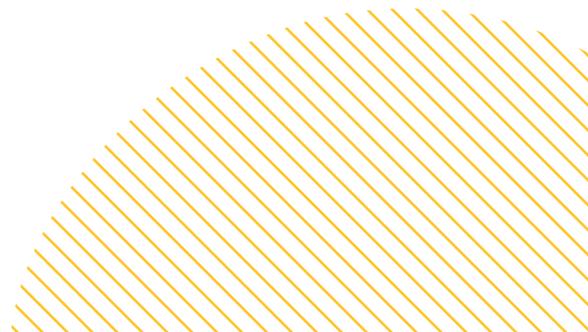
Transformational healthcare projects

"Our ADOPTS methodology is an operational model-improvement framework for transformational healthcare projects," Malouf-Todaro noted.

As a starting point, organizations move through a process with six phases, where they assess, design, optimize, prepare, transform, and sustain their telehealth system. Looking proactively at every area of operations, the organization strategically builds telehealth around efficiency, cost containment/savings, and improved outcomes. This comprehensive approach delivers value by measurable improvement in quality, enhanced service, and cost reduction through alignment of people, process, and technology.

Organizations can scale their telehealth programs while remaining compliant and build across multiple states, specialties, and other barriers that often inhibit maturity. Learning to navigate telehealth regulations is an important part of this process. At the Champion level, these healthcare systems and institutions can begin proactively transforming and innovating in earnest. This creates opportunities to differentiate from the competition and demonstrate thought leadership in the healthcare industry.

Although healthcare has largely focused for many years on the EMR and transitioning to digital records as the future goal, these concepts are quickly becoming part of legacy thinking. Interoperability is the key ingredient in the success of telehealth innovation. Standards play a significant role in healthcare interoperability across the care continuum for payers, workflows, and data sharing. To truly lead in the healthcare space, the conversation must move to offering transformative patient experiences now. Healthcare organizations must take the lead in innovation before competition and further disruption takes hold.





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Dr. Nabia Malouf-Todaro
*Business Process and Care Management
 Senior Managing Consultant of
 Healthcare and Life Sciences
 NTT DATA Services*

“Essentially, as the healthcare industry is transforming and thinking about more digital technologies, we together have been thinking about how to help our customers undergo this transformation,” Malouf-Todaro emphasized.

By undertaking these issues, healthcare institutions prepare themselves for what’s next. They are then ready to scale and meet demand in their communities, partnership alliance and beyond. “Evolving and transforming along with their business into more consumerism and a population health focus holds the answer to building telehealth programs that last and modernize organizations,” Malouf-Todaro said. “Healthcare organizations should consolidate virtual care under one enterprise-wide system for better interoperability, cost savings, and access to care.”

The eight pillars NTT DATA Telehealth Maturity Model and its next-step levels can assist

organizations in taking the path toward the priorities that are most important in telehealth to stay competitive. Malouf-Todaro has additional recommendations for healthcare organizations:

- Keep an eye on the financial health of your telehealth program
- Stay focused on the problem that you are trying to solve
- Seek out executive and clinical leaders who encourage use of innovation at all levels and are actively engaged in transformation of the organizational culture to embrace innovation

“Telehealth goes beyond healthcare IT and remote medicine,” she said. “It has the potential to reinvigorate areas of the U.S. healthcare system that aren’t meeting patient needs.”

NTT DATA

About NTT Data Service:

NTT DATA Services is committed to improving patient outcomes by creating efficiencies across the healthcare ecosystem. A recognized leader in the healthcare space, the company delivers targeted segment solutions including patient engagement, predictive analytics, healthcare cloud hosting, integration and interoperability, clinical and claims application implementation, revenue cycle management and policy administration, in addition to core managed infrastructure, application and business process services. Its clients include more than 2,000 acute care clients, 40,000 clinicians, 40 pharma clients, 15 medical technology clients, and 50 insurance providers in support of 65 million policy holders.

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¹American Hospital Association (AHA).org. “Telehealth: A Path to Virtual Integrated Care.” https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2019/02/MarketInsights_TeleHealthReport.pdf. March 2019.