



WHITEPAPER

The Interoperability Sandbox

Ensure your virtual care delivery platform plays nicely with your other IT systems.



Interoperability has been a hot topic lately, and for good reason. As patients' expectations for convenience care evolve, technology plays a larger role in how they interact with providers. Healthcare systems looking to retain and attract patients are offering telehealth services, but with a new modality of care comes a stream of potentially disconnected data in the patient's care continuum, and that presents its own set of challenges. When considering convenience care options for your patients, choosing a partner that can fully integrate into the systems and workflows you've already established is crucial.

Interoperability requires more than a vendor—you need a partner

You've decided to offer telehealth services to provide a convenient and affordable way for your patients to access care. But if the vendor you've selected only provides an add-on service and not full interoperability, you are creating increased work for your providers and administrators, not to mention potential frustration for your patients. Your selection criteria for virtual care partners should include their ability to integrate into the systems you've already invested time and money in.

Here are a few recommendations to keep in mind when you are evaluating the interoperability of your telehealth offering.





Name brand or homegrown, they integrate with your existing EHR systems

Whether your organization operates on the big platforms like Cerner or Epic or on a solution that was built in house, your telehealth solution should flow into (and out of) the EHR seamlessly. For example, a vendor that maintains its own EHR or that sends over the after-visit summary in a PDF is not fully integrated—or contributing meaningfully to the patient’s continuum of care. Look for a partner that provides discrete, structured data in an industry-standard format your existing EHR knows what to do with. This should include chart notes, interview transcripts, images, and the after-visit summary, as well as coding information required for billing. And each visit should live as a separate encounter within the EHR.

In short, **if clinicians have to spend time on data entry after a virtual visit, your telehealth solution isn’t fully integrated.**



They know investigation comes before implementation

Implementation can make or break the success of a telehealth program. There are layers upon layers of complexity to plan around. A partner with a history of success implementing at healthcare systems like yours already knows which resources to marshal, what questions to ask, and the roadblocks to prepare for. A dedicated telehealth partner should provide the resources you need to get up and running quickly and with the staff you already have.



A single patient visit, a complete picture of care

Exceptional care delivery can’t happen in a vacuum; it requires context. A patient’s current symptoms are no more or less important than their health history, which means a clinician needs to be able to see all of it. The right telehealth partner will give your clinicians access to the patient’s complete health history without having to actually log in to the EHR so they can make the right diagnosis.



One portal for multiple care destinations

Password fatigue is real. Who among us hasn't tried logging into our bank account and wondered, "is this the site where I use my daughter's birthday combined with the address of the house I grew up in followed by the @ sign, or did I set this up when I was obsessed with Stranger Things and changed the main characters' names into numbers?" Now imagine trying to remember it when you aren't feeling well.

If using your virtual care option requires patients to sign on to a different website, using a different name and password, you will frustrate them or, worse, lose them to a care location that doesn't require mental gymnastics. Your telehealth platform should live within your portal, letting patients use a single sign-on (SSO) to access the right care for their situation.



Can you navigate your own healthcare system?

Patients with a mild case of the flu don't belong in your emergency department, just as someone with severe chest pains should not schedule an appointment with their PCP for three weeks out. A fully interoperable telehealth solution should act as a form of triage, helping guide patients to the right venue of care. For low-acuity conditions, virtual care can help provide treatment. For more serious issues, your telehealth solution should escalate the patient to a higher modality of care immediately. No matter what level of care the patient needs, it should be easy for them to get there.



Third-party, first-person

Your patients come to you for care because they trust you. Your brand means something important to them. If, during the course of accessing care, they encounter an option that feels off-brand or outside of your network, they're going to have questions. Your virtual care option should look and feel like the rest of the services you offer your patients.



Care doesn't end when the visit is over

Care delivery is more than providing a diagnosis and wishing the patient the best. Educating the patient through their after-visit summary and providing opportunities for clinicians to follow up needs to be an integral part of your telehealth service. If your virtual care platform doesn't automatically turn the chart-ready SOAP note into an AVS the patient can understand and act on, it's not fully interoperable.



When it can't deliver care, it still delivers value

Virtual care that is fully integrated into your existing systems is not just a method of delivering care; it can serve as a way to direct patients to the right modality of care. If, after answering questions through an online medical interview, the reviewing clinician decides the patient needs a higher level of care, they can escalate to a higher modality. When the patient arrives for the in-person (or video) visit, all of the information from the online interview is reflected in the EHR, saving both the provider and patient valuable time.



Check, please!

Full interoperability means your virtual care platform plugs into the billing workflows you've taken great pains to optimize within your practice-management system. Along with updating EHRs, your telehealth solution should provide the option to automatically queue billing codes according to the diagnosis and treatment selected by the clinician, and then send this documentation to your finance department.



Interoperability Vendor Checklist

The above might feel like a lot to absorb. Here's a checklist to keep on hand while you're evaluating potential virtual care vendors:

- 1 **Your telehealth solution should flow into (and out of) the EHR seamlessly**
- 2 **A dedicated telehealth partner should provide the resources you need to get up and running quickly**
- 3 **A patient's current symptoms are no more or less important than their health history**
- 4 **Your telehealth platform should let patients use a single sign-on (SSO)**
- 5 **A fully interoperable telehealth solution should act as a form of triage**
- 6 **Your virtual care option should look and feel like the rest of your services**
- 7 **Provide after-visit summaries and opportunities for clinicians to follow up**
- 8 **Virtual care should be fully integrated into your existing systems**
- 9 **Automatically queue billing codes and send documentation to the finance department**

About Bright.md

Founded in 2014 and based in Portland, Oregon, Bright.md is a leading healthcare automation company dedicated to modernizing direct-to-patient telehealth for healthcare systems with its AI-powered virtual-care platform, SmartExam. Bright.md partners with premier healthcare organizations in North America, including three of the top five not-for-profit health systems in the United States. These partners offer SmartExam to more than 10 million patients who are seeking convenient urgent and primary care online. Bright.md has been named the Leader in the "Forrester New Wave™: Virtual Care Solutions for Digital Health" report, a Gartner Cool Vendor in Healthcare, and is the preferred choice of AVIA's Virtual Access cohort. Bright.md is venture-backed by B Capital Group, Seven Peaks Ventures, Pritzker Group Venture Capital, Oregon Angel Fund and the Stanford-StartX Fund.