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Allina Health

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Allina Health Dramatically Expands Its Reach of Specialist Telehealth Virtual Services

How the Minnesota-based health care system uses Vidyo integration with Ignis Health to create an efficient mode of care for rural communities

Like many health systems operating in large, mostly rural states, Allina Health used to face challenges servicing areas outside of metropolitan locations. Allina Health operates primarily at four hospitals in the greater St. Paul-Minneapolis area, but high-demand specialists like cardiologists could spend hours on the road to clinics for a half day of appointments. As Paula Maidl, Manager of Virtual Care Technology for Allina Health, says with typical understated Midwestern pragmatism, "They just realized it was not a real viable thing to do. Driving all over is not a good use of a cardiologist's time."

Telemedicine offered an alternative approach: Allina Health could improve operational efficiencies to remotely deliver premier patient care. Its TeleStroke service had been the first to demonstrate the ability to reach patients outside of Allina facilities, but the health system's leadership was not convinced that the packaged solution TeleStroke used would enable expansion. "The thought was, can we build our own carts and get a software platform tool that didn't have the requirement of purchasing its own cart?"

IDS Integrates Vidyo

In 2014, Allina Health selected Indiana-based telehealth systems integrator Interactive Digital Solutions (IDS) and their proposed solution built around the VidyoHealth platform. Expansion occurred quickly: within months, Allina Health rolled out its TeleHeart service, and then steadily introduced other specialist services like Telehospitalist,



Telepsychiatry, and Mental Health Assessment and Referral for emergency departments in regional hospitals and affiliate sites.

The VidyoHealth platform also enabled Allina Health to quickly adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing intensive care virtual telehealth, and virtual visits for patients to connect from home with their primary care provider.

“For the majority of our providers, they’ve found it easy to use, with high-quality video and audio,” says Maidl. “It was very positively received.”

Maidl says multiple features have made a difference in Allina Health’s expansion through telehealth:

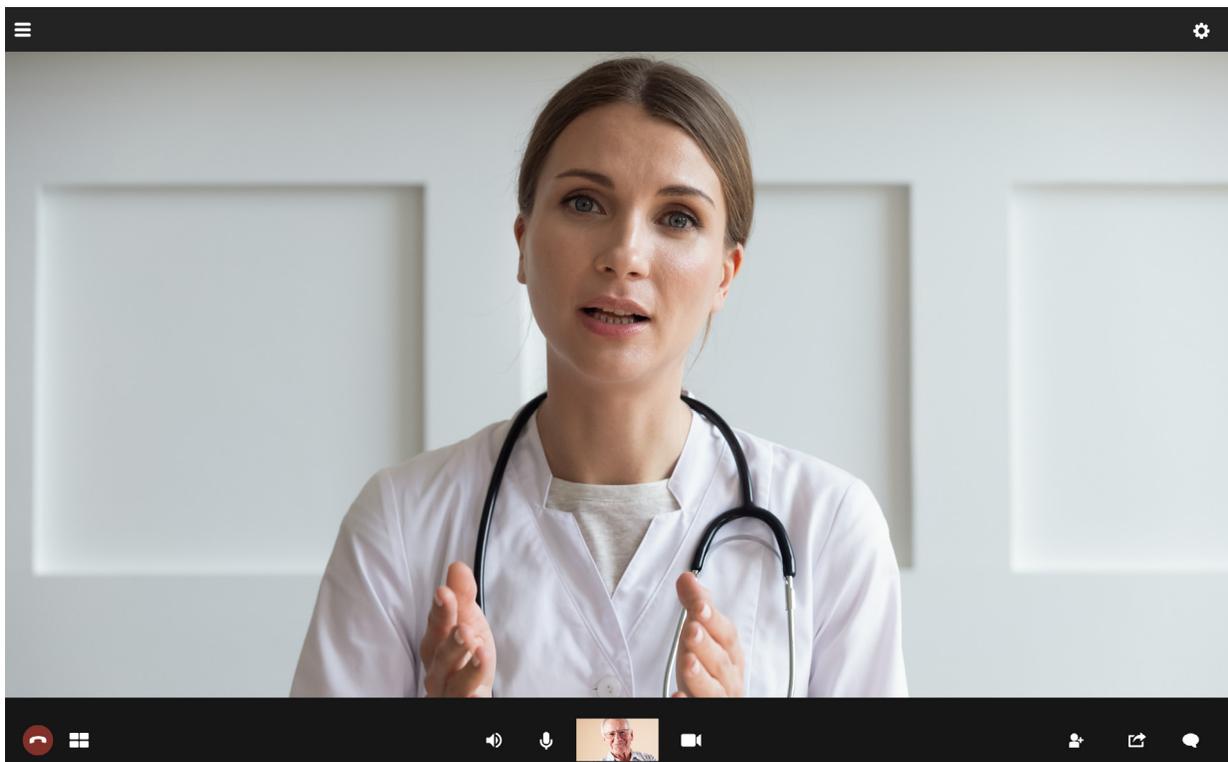
- Login through the Allina Health App, which simplified virtual services for patients and providers alike
- Auto-answer incoming calls on patient devices
- Connection through any type of device including laptop and , not only a dedicated medical cart
- Secure internal distribution via Information Systems of a single application package

In addition to ease of use and management, Maidl also notes a key technical benefit that supports the financial ROI of telehealth: Vidyo software efficiently manages video signals for any bandwidth. “A lot of a health system’s reimbursement for telehealth services is dependent on reporting that live interactive component,” she explains. “As long as you had that live video connection, then your reimbursement was going to be okay.”

Analytics and Reporting Upgrades

As Allina Health expanded its telehealth services, data analytics and reporting needed to keep up. IDS recommended and deployed Ignis Health TRP, which seamlessly integrates with VidyoHealth to centralize and analyze real-time data from clinical, financial and operational sources.

“The biggest advantage of Ignis Health TRP, especially during the pandemic, was the ability to self-monitor our VidyoHealth license usage so we could scale and adjust based on demand and need,” says Maidl. “But since we’ve had the tool and been able to use it, it’s become a really great way for us to monitor and pull metrics for our monthly dashboards. It’s been helpful to gain insights into service-specific metrics and things like what devices people use, as we’ve encouraged our providers to use the VidyoHealth app, instead of using their web browser.”



Dramatic growth

Over the last five years, telehealth services have become an important source of expansion and reach into new communities. Prior to the pandemic, Allina Health averaged 14 virtual visits in a non-clinical setting per day, while during the pandemic (May-December), virtual visits shot up to an average of 1300 virtual visits per day. For telehealth visits in clinical settings, Allina previously averaged 53 connections per day and are currently averaging over 213 connections per day.

“VidyoHealth has provided a mode of care that is efficient and lower cost than having to physically staff all these services across all our locations,” says Maidl. “For programs that we offer outside of Allina facilities, it gets our expertise and brand out in the community and allows us to provide very specialized care to patients who may not have the ability to receive that type of care in some rural locations.”

More Telemedicine Services Planned

Allina Health is now exploring how virtual health services can apply to additional types of inpatient specialist services in their metro hospitals—such as infectious disease, pulmonology—and offering those to regional or rural communities. “We don’t have a lot of those kinds of specialists employed,” explains Maidl, “so if we can increase their reach to more hospitals through telehealth capacity, then maybe we don’t have to hire a low-need specialist at that hospital.”

The health system is even excited to try utilizing VidyoHealth for some visual oversight into operating rooms, with a specialist able to view the surgery and provide audio feedback. “That’s a new thing for us, it’s just at its very beginnings.”



Keys to Success

1. Integrated Analytics and License Usage Monitoring
2. Video Quality Signal Prioritization
3. SSO Login Integration
4. Multi-device Capability
5. Incoming Call Auto-Answer
6. Secure Internal Application Package Distribution

“Vidyo provides a stable and user-friendly TeleHealth solution. It has proven to be an imperative time-saving tool in our EDs and MedSurg units.”

— Paula Maidl
 Manager, IS Virtual Care Technology
 Allina Health

About Allina Health

Allina Health is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of illness and enhancing the greater health of individuals, families and communities throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin. A not-for-profit health care system, Allina Health cares for patients from beginning to end-of-life, with 11 hospitals, more than 90 clinics, and 52 rehabilitation locations. Allina Health serves their communities by providing exceptional care, as they prevent illness, restore health and provide comfort to all who entrust them with their care. AllinaHealth.org