



Care Without Boundaries

ADVOCATE HEALTH'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN VIRTUAL CARE



Foreword

Care Without Boundaries: Advocate Health's National Leadership in Virtual Care



Eugene A. Woods

Two of the most foundational parts of my job are listening to patient experiences and steering the implementation of new technology. I heard a story recently about the intersection of those two things — and it reinforced the importance of what we're driving forward at Advocate Health.

The patient was a 67-year-old woman. After a visit to her primary care doctor, she learned her blood pressure was quite high: 172/99.

She was given a cuff to take home and instructions to monitor her numbers.

Some time passed. We hadn't heard from her. So we used an AI tool, nicknamed Anna, to follow up, give her a call, and get her latest reading.

At first, she tried to explain that high blood pressure was just something that happened at her doctor's office as a symptom of "White Coat Syndrome."

But the AI tool explained to her why it was important for her to check her blood pressure, even at home.

So with "Anna" guiding her along over the phone, the woman sat down, put the blood pressure cuff on, and got a new reading.

It was 196/114 — extremely high.

The AI program immediately transferred her to a nurse, who set her up with an appointment to quickly see her doctor.

In total, this phone call took about 11 minutes. But I'd venture to say that the impact of this brief exchange on this patient's life could be measured in years or even decades.

This story resonated with me because it gets at the heart of our philosophy on innovation here at Advocate Health.

It's not just about what's cutting-edge. It's not about replacing human touch with technology.

It's about making sure that technology is a force multiplier for humanity in care. It's about helping people where they are, when they need it, in ways we simply can't do on our own.

I've been in the healthcare field for over 30 years. One of the most remarkable things about this industry is how technology

and innovation can change patients' lives in real time. And while my career has spanned a few decades, I would say that the advancements I've seen in the past few years, especially when it comes to virtual care, are possibly the most profound and impactful when it comes to how we treat our patients.

And at Advocate Health, we're leading the charge — and making sure that virtual care is offered... virtually everywhere.

An appointment with a primary care doctor no longer requires a day off from work or a long drive to an office building. Instead, patients can schedule a virtual visit at any time that works for them and meet with their doctor over their smartphone or computer. That's especially impactful for people in rural communities where travel to a clinician can be a barrier.

Thanks to our Hospital at Home program — the largest of its kind in the country — over 30,000 patients have received hospital-level care from the comfort of their own homes. And we recently announced the nation's largest hospital-based drone delivery network, which means that prescriptions and home-health equipment will literally be dropped on patients' doorsteps. That's life changing, and maybe even lifesaving, for someone who lives in a remote area where the nearest pharmacy can be miles away.

All this good work is rooted in the same central purpose: making the best, most innovative care accessible to more people.

When Advocate Aurora Health and Atrium Health combined in 2022 to form Advocate Health, we put forward a bold vision to redefine care for all. And in the subsequent years, we've harnessed our scale and capabilities to accelerate discovery and deliver better outcomes.

I'm so proud of the virtual ecosystem of care we've already created — and the way we've removed the constraints of geography and time that have limited care up until this point.

We are not just delivering world-class care — we're making it more accessible to everyone we serve.

And we're just getting started.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eugene A. Woods".

Eugene A. Woods

Chief Executive Officer

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2

Introduction 3

Hospital at Home 6

 The Challenge6

 The Advocate Way.....6

 Not Just for Adults 7

 The Right Blueprint.....8

Keeping Patients Healthy 9

 The Challenge9

 The Advocate Way9

 Virtual Primary Care 10

 Overcoming Stigma 10

 The Youngest Patients 11

 “She Even Got to Meet Our New Puppy!” 12

 Finding a Voice Through Speech Therapy..... 13

 “It Really Blows My Mind What You Can Do” 14

 Rewriting the Future of Brain Health 14

 Sleep Care, Reimagined 15

 A Strong Connection Made Virtually 16

Staying on the Leading Edge17

 The Challenge 17

 The Advocate Way 17

 Up and Away 19

Conclusion20

References21

Executive Summary

The future of healthcare is not confined to clinic walls — and Advocate Health is proving it.

As the third-largest nonprofit health system in the country, Advocate Health has built virtual care into a core operating capability, not a convenience feature.

Across 10 states and 47 unique virtual services, the health system logged 2.2 million virtual encounters in 2025 alone — a 30% increase in a single year. This growth demonstrates that integrated virtual care at scale is not only possible, but essential.

This paper makes three arguments:

- **The best outcomes in virtual care** come when it is delivered as part of holistic, integrated care within a full health system — not as a standalone app or single service.
- **Scale enables innovation.** Advocate Health's national footprint allows it to test, refine and deploy virtual solutions — from Hospital at Home to AI-powered outreach — in ways smaller systems cannot.
- **The question is no longer whether virtual care works,** but whether health systems are willing to commit to it with the same rigor they apply to in-person care.

Advocate Health has made that commitment. This paper shows what that looks like in practice.

Across **10** states

30% increase
in a single year

2.2M virtual
encounters in 2025

47 unique
virtual services

Introduction

Six years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic placed extraordinary strain on the U.S. healthcare system. As doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists and others fought the virus on the front lines, they also had to rapidly rethink how routine care was delivered, too.

Chronic conditions still required management. Prescriptions required refilling. Necessary care couldn't be delayed. Half of all U.S. adults have high blood pressure,¹ and reports suggest that more than 76% of Americans live with at least one chronic illness.²

The pandemic accelerated a transformation that might have otherwise taken years. Health systems and providers were pushed to find ways to help people and adopted virtual tools that enabled remote care delivery.

As the world began returning to normal, much of the healthcare field followed. But Advocate Health has continued pushing forward — seeking new, innovative ways to meet patients' needs with the same sense of urgency it felt during the pandemic.

This evolution reflects a strategic shift from pilot programs to an integrated operating model. Virtual health now serves as a durable lever for expanding access, strengthening the workforce, transforming care delivery and improving system flexibility and resilience. Virtual care is no longer a parallel channel — it is an integral component of how care is delivered.

Patients have responded. In 2025, Advocate Health logged 2.2 million virtual encounters across its footprint — a 30% increase in a single year. The system's scale, depth of expertise and unwavering commitment to virtual health suggests those numbers will keep growing.

Of course, in the last few years, digital startups have rapidly emerged. Designed to provide convenient access to medication or counseling, these companies offer consumers access to healthcare in ways similar to how they shop for groceries and clothing.

While a digital-only company might be able to give a patient access to medicine quickly and easily, they don't offer the same depth or continuity of care an integrated health system does.

They won't remind users they're due for a colonoscopy or a mammogram and coordinate that care — the kind of important preventive care that is both routine for a health system and potentially lifesaving to a consumer. Nor can they perform those screenings or provide hospital-level care when something goes wrong.

Similarly, health systems that do not consistently test and adopt leading-edge tools risk failing to deliver excellent care in convenient ways, leaving patients behind.

"There's a false choice in the marketplace that says you can go to an established health system and get in-depth, comprehensive care, or get convenient niche healthcare online on one specific issue. Patients need both, and we do both," said Dr. Matt Anderson, senior vice president and chief physician officer for the North Carolina and Georgia division of Advocate Health.

"We don't use these digital tools because they're bright, shiny toys," Dr. Anderson said. "Virtual care gives us the ability to care for anyone, anytime, anywhere. We do it because our purpose is to redefine care, for all."

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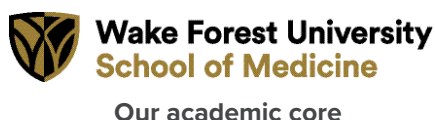
DR. MATT ANDERSON

Senior Vice President and Chief Physician Officer
for the North Carolina and
Georgia Division of Advocate Health

Advocate Health believes the future of healthcare will be shaped by those who can deliver virtual services across the full continuum of care — from routine checkups to ongoing health management — with a focus on convenience, consistency and connection.

The organization is leading that charge across its footprint: as Advocate Health Care in Illinois and Indiana, Atrium Health in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, and Aurora Health Care in Wisconsin and Michigan.

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As an integrated health system with a whole-person approach to care, its scale, resources, depth of expertise and operational efficiencies uniquely position Advocate Health to expand access to care and help more people.

Ultimately, Dr. Anderson said, excellent virtual care is about making real connections between real people. At Advocate Health, that means connecting people who need care to the clinical experts who can provide it, increasing access to high-quality care for all.



McColl

“Our mantra is ‘care is care,’” said Molly McColl, Advocate Health vice president of virtual health and clinical transformation. “No matter if you’re presenting to our emergency room or logging into our app for a virtual visit, you’re getting the same level of excellent care. We vet every service — whether in-person or virtual — with the same rigor, from the moment you check in to the time you end the visit.”

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MOLLY MCCOLL

Vice President of Virtual Health and Clinical Transformation at Advocate Health

BY THE NUMBERS



47 unique virtual care services at **258** sites across **10** states



2.2M virtual encounters in 2025, up **30%** from 2024



More than **30,000** Hospital at Home patients served

About **150** current Hospital at Home patients



More than **266,000** mental health virtual visits



Nearly **303,000** people served through telehealth in 2025, up **19%** from 2024



15,000 rural patients served, up **48%** from 2024

To continue advancing virtual tools and redefining care, Advocate Health is:

- Expanding its Hospital at Home program, which is already the largest in the country. It boldly brings hospital-level care into patients' homes to ease burdens and improve outcomes.
- Building dedicated teams to run programs that help patients get healthy — and stay healthy — outside of the hospital, including physical therapy, primary care, pediatrics, sleep therapy, mental health and more.
- Responsibly harnessing the power of AI and testing other tools that can help ease administrative burdens and enable more efficient care.

Last year, Congress approved measures that make telehealth and Hospital at Home financially viable for now. Health systems and industry groups are lobbying to make those rules permanent.⁴

And at a time when rising healthcare costs are top of mind for patients and government leaders, evidence shows

that expanded access to virtual tools does not necessarily increase overall healthcare utilization or meaningfully raise the total cost of care.

A recent study by the American Telemedicine Association found that Medicare patients averaged just 0.25 additional visits per year — “essentially flat utilization despite massive virtual care growth.” The study of nine health systems, including Advocate Health, also showed that one system saved more than \$8 million by avoiding unnecessary referrals and transport costs.⁵

For clinicians like Dr. Anderson, this work is deeply personal. With a background in primary care, he knows exactly how important it is to get people the best possible care when they need it.

“It’s not good enough for us to focus only on the people who come into our practices and ignore the fact that there are so many people out there who need care,” Dr. Anderson said. “I feel a sense of responsibility to help people be healthier, and these virtual tools help both me and my patients accomplish that goal.”



Hospital at Home

The Challenge

The aging U.S. population is expected to put increasing strain on the country's healthcare system.⁶ That growing demand, combined with a relatively static number of hospital beds and a nationwide shortage of clinicians, will continue to increase the burden on providers if nothing changes.

Building more brick-and-mortar hospitals isn't the answer. Certainly, some areas of the country need more hospital beds. But developing and operating more buildings doesn't adequately address the critical staffing shortages across the country,⁷ and it doesn't help lower the cost of care for patients, insurers and the government.

Plus, expanding physical infrastructure ignores patients' growing desire to receive care in more comfortable, familiar environments. No matter how warm and private a hospital setting may be, people will always prefer to heal at home. Providers want that for their patients, too.

The Advocate Way

Addressing these challenges means redefining where healing happens.



Every day, Advocate Health's Hospital at Home program cares for about 150 patients across its national footprint — using its expertise to sustainably expand access to care and quite literally meet patients where they are. About 30,000 patients have received care through the program to date.

It's the largest program of its kind in the country, helping twice as many people per day as the next largest program — a fact that emphasizes the health system's commitment to this model.

In short, the program enables clinicians to provide hospital-quality care in a patient's home. Technology-enabled remote monitoring and coordination allow providers to deliver seamless care that pairs virtual and in-person visits to treat many conditions traditionally managed in the hospital.

For those patients eligible for Hospital at Home, the team develops a daily care plan that includes medication management, appointment scheduling and necessary referrals to subspecialists. Visits take place both virtually and in-person, with certified clinicians who monitor vital

signs and ensure proper medication administration. Many labs, imaging tests and IVs are also provided at home, as appropriate.

Most importantly, this model allows patients to heal at home, often with their families by their sides — avoiding long hours waiting in the hospital or repeated trips to and from a facility.

About half of the patients in the program come from rural ZIP codes. That has essentially created the capacity of a rural hospital — 75 acute care hospital beds — across rural North Carolina.

"This is the most patient-centered care that you're going to have," said Dr. Daniel Davis, vice president and physician lead of continuing health at Advocate Health. "When you care for someone at home, you get a window into important aspects of their care you might not otherwise see, like if their situation leaves them without access to medication or food, for example."

"Maybe we learn that it would help to connect them with housing resources. We have this unique ability to see holistically what's driving the patient's health. It really puts the patient at the center."

The program's benefits reach far beyond any one patient's health. As more people opt to receive care virtually, there are fewer falls, less hospital-based delirium and fewer healthcare-associated infections.

Compared to an inpatient stay, Hospital at Home patients report having a far easier time resting and focusing on recovery. Some of the outcome data also show a more than 20% reduction in hospital readmission rates, contributing to faster recoveries and healthier communities.

"The Hospital at Home program gives us an up-close look into what is driving the health of the populations we serve, from rural to urban," Dr. Davis said. "The service allows us to not only improve the health of each individual patient we are caring for, but to build resources to better the health of entire neighborhoods."

Now, Advocate Health is using its expertise and resources to expand the program, which began in the Charlotte area in 2020 and has since expanded to Illinois in late 2025 and Wisconsin in 2026. Each market's program has started small, and they will grow over time.

“We can scale in a sustainable way across multiple states because we have a unified logistics infrastructure, allowing us to help more people,” Dr. Davis said.

Hospital at Home also helps address the nationwide staffing shortage by enabling providers in one state to virtually care for a patient in another location.

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DR. DANIEL DAVIS

Vice President and Physician Lead of
Continuing Health at Advocate Health

Not Just for Adults

It’s not just adults who prefer to heal at home. So do kids – and their parents.

That’s why in 2025, Advocate Health started a Hospital at Home program for children. The launch of Atrium Health Levine Children’s Hospital at Home makes Advocate Health the only health system in the nation to provide home-based, hospital-level care to both pediatric and adult patients.

“We operate at or above capacity well over 95% of the time. We are looking at this as a way to increase our ability to reach patients,” Dr. Stefanie Reed, medical director at Levine Children’s Hospital at Home, told Modern Healthcare. “Our families are saying this is how they want to receive care.”⁸

The program offers children a similar cadence of in-home and virtual visits as adult patients, including in-person check-ins from paramedics to take vitals and video calls with physicians to keep track of progress.

NBC News highlighted the experience of Mackenzie,⁹ who endured several difficult days in the hospital with the flu. A traditional hospital setting can be especially stressful for children with ongoing health challenges.

Through the program, Mackenzie was able to transition home while continuing to receive the same hospital-level care, including in-person clinical visits, virtual check-ins and continuous monitoring.

At home, surrounded by familiar comforts like her bed, toys and routines, she was able to recover with significantly less stress and disruption.

For Mackenzie, the benefits were both physical and emotional. Being at home allowed for more restful recovery, fewer interruptions and reduced anxiety compared to a hospital setting.

“Finding out we were able to go home just completely switched the mood,” her mother, Stephanie, said. “This is where all of her favorite things are.”



The Right Blueprint



Dr. Tonellato

Like many doctors, when Dr. Daniel Tonellato was in medical school, he did not anticipate virtual care being a big part of his career.

An emergency medicine physician at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in the Chicago suburb of Park Ridge, Illinois, Dr. Tonellato first started thinking about Hospital at Home on the job. Like many doctors across the country, he noticed the emergency department was consistently busy day after day and wondered what could be done.

That's when he started looking into Hospital at Home, a program already in place in Charlotte.

"We needed to figure out a way to build capacity that's flexible. I didn't really know how to say that in those words at the time, but I realized that you can't just keep taking care of more and more patients in the same physical space," Dr. Tonellato said.

"And we need to figure out an innovative way to do that. When I saw this program operating elsewhere, I thought: This is going to work. People love it."

When implementing the program in the Chicago area in late 2025, Dr. Tonellato and the Advocate Lutheran General team realized they couldn't simply replicate the Atrium Health program in Charlotte. State regulations differ, and every community has its unique needs.

Still, because Hospital at Home was already established within the system, the Park Ridge team didn't have to start from scratch.

"Dr. Davis and a lot of on-the-ground team members were able to help us," Dr. Tonellato said. "I wouldn't say we replicated the program, but took the blueprints of the program, brought it here to Illinois and built something new."



Turner

The Hospital at Home program expanded to Aurora Health Care in Wisconsin in spring 2026. These efforts were aided not only by proven blueprints, but also by people who could share their experience with the program — people like Alexandra Turner.

A Charlotte-based intensive care nurse by training, Turner helped set up the Illinois program. Much like Dr. Tonellato, Turner — a clinical process manager — didn't get into healthcare expecting to become a leader in virtual health.

Because she holds an Illinois license, Turner has cared for Hospital at Home patients in Chicagoland virtually from Charlotte, helping ease staffing pressures by assisting wherever she's needed.

"When we talk to our patients, it's on a tablet. We can Zoom with them to see them, or we can call them on the phone," Turner said. "They are connected to us through their armband, which is sending us their vital signs. Our nurses respond if anything seems off."

"We have regular check-in points, so they know after they've been with the program for about 24 hours when to expect a call. We're calling in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. And then our in-home team is going to see those patients in the home twice a day."

Turner said it's common for clinicians in the Hospital at Home program to step up and help each other.

"To see how these teammates come together and remain such a close team, even in a virtual setting, is incredible," she said. "They take care of each other and are willing to step in and take on different roles."

Dr. Tonellato said that even in its opening months, Hospital at Home is clearly catching on.

"We've seen that there are actually patients who have heard about the program from family or friends in the community, and they'll start asking for the program," he said.

Keeping Patients Healthy

The Challenge

Healthcare can seem inaccessible to people for many reasons, even when they're actively seeking it.

They might live in a rural area, many miles from the nearest hospital or clinic. They may find that the closest clinic doesn't have the exact services they need, or that appointments aren't available immediately.

When people can't get the treatment they need when they need it, their conditions can worsen.¹⁰ Sicker people tend to have more complex and involved healthcare needs, creating greater challenges for both patients and health systems that are already at capacity. More acute care also tends to cost more.

Expanding access through virtual care helps address these challenges. By making it easier for more people to get timely care, virtual tools can keep people healthier and out of the hospital — which is good for everyone.

The Advocate Way

Advocate Health is facing this difficult scenario head-on. While health systems can't slow the pace of life, they can develop out-of-the-box virtual initiatives to meet patients where they are.

It might be surprising what clinicians can do virtually. It spans the full continuum of care.

Not only can patients receive excellent hospital-level care at home, but children can also get high-quality sick or well care at school. Physical therapy that was once only available on site can be done from anywhere, and intrusive sleep tests once performed in uncomfortable hospital rooms can now be done in patients' own bedrooms.

These tools to get and stay healthy are viable options for every patient, including those who wouldn't consider themselves tech-savvy.



Jankuski

"You have this stigma in your head that this is for younger, tech-enabled patients," said Craig Jankuski, vice president of rehabilitation services for Advocate Health. "Then all of a sudden, we're seeing 75-year-old grandmas and grandpas saying: 'I didn't know this was so easy.'"

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'I didn't know this was so easy.'"

CRAIG JANKUSKI

Vice President of Rehabilitation Services
for Advocate Health

Advocate Health is also exploring new ways to expand care, such as piloting a mobile phlebotomy program in the Charlotte area this year. Through this program, clinicians are going out into the community to perform routine blood draws for a relatively small number of people — eliminating the time and planning typically required for an in-person clinic visit.

Not every virtual care idea goes beyond the testing phase, but expanding care access requires a willingness to innovate.

"That's what we'll make a decision around: Do people like this? Should we invest in this and build our own capability?" McColl said. "It could help us extend our 'for all' mission into more vulnerable communities. We're finding new solutions, measuring whether they work and trying to put great care within reach of everyone."

Virtual Primary Care

Finding the time to travel to an in-person appointment isn't always easy. Virtual primary care offers a flexible alternative that fits into busy schedules.

Patients can schedule appointments with family medicine or pediatric physicians and advanced practice providers and build relationships that are just as authentic and personal as those formed in an office.

Virtual providers focus on getting to know each patient, learning their family history, social factors and lifestyle goals to provide holistic care. This service:

- Provides care for common illnesses and injuries
- Offers chronic condition management (diabetes, hypertension, heart failure, etc.)
- Addresses behavioral health concerns like anxiety and depression
- Serves as a simplified way of getting prescriptions refilled or adjusted

Virtual providers can easily and quickly connect with a specialist for swift input or recommendations. If a patient needs to be evaluated in person for things like ear pain or a rash, providers can seamlessly coordinate the necessary in-person care.

Virtual primary care is especially useful for caregivers. It eliminates travel and wait times for appointments, and even provides the option for caregivers to join appointments from another location.



Overcoming Stigma

Overcoming stigma remains one of the most significant barriers to treatment for individuals living with substance use disorders. While many patients value the convenience of care outside traditional clinical settings, the stakes are far higher for patients with substance use disorders.

Entering a clinic can trigger fears of judgment, past negative experiences or concerns about being labeled — barriers that research has consistently shown can delay or prevent engagement in care.



Dr. Levy

Dr. Robert Levy, a family medicine-OB physician in Kannapolis, North Carolina, who is board certified in addiction medicine, has seen firsthand how virtual care can transform that experience.

“Some patients struggling with addiction, especially in the most active phase of the disease, face challenges that make the office environment overwhelming,” Dr. Levy said. “Patients with alcohol or opioid use disorder may hesitate to seek care because they anticipate stigma or judgment. A virtual introduction creates a safer, more approachable first step toward stigma-free care.”

Virtual visits often serve as a critical bridge, allowing clinicians like Dr. Levy to initiate counseling, prescribe evidence based medications for addiction treatment, and address essential primary care needs that patients may have avoided for months or even years.

This early engagement can be pivotal: National studies show that reducing stigma and lowering barriers to entry significantly increases the likelihood that patients will remain in treatment and achieve long-term recovery.

“So many patients with substance use disorders begin with virtual care,” Dr. Levy said. “Over time, many choose to transition to in-person visits. Virtual care isn’t just convenient — it’s a powerful tool for reaching a population that might otherwise go untreated. There are nuances to making it work well, but when done thoughtfully, it’s remarkably effective.”

The Youngest Patients

It can be difficult for adults to schedule care around their busy schedules — and even more so when they're arranging care for their children.

Adults already have to work around their jobs and transportation options to get care in person, and caring for children adds another layer of complexity. From school schedules to extracurricular activities, aligning care with typical clinic hours can be especially challenging.

Virtual care options can ease a lot of those complications, allowing children to get care faster, even while still in school in some cases. The ability to start a sick child on a course of antibiotics as soon as their symptoms begin, instead of the next morning when a medical office opens, can significantly affect how long that child is suffering and out of school.



Cody

"A lot of times, the hours of a traditional primary care practice just don't meet the hours that fit the needs for a family with one or two working parents," said Megan Cody, vice president of children's primary care, virtual health and school services for Advocate Health.

"It's been a constant frustration that we've heard from our consumers for years, and pediatric virtual primary care has allowed us to be able to provide the same high-quality care that people have come to expect of us in brick-and-mortar clinics."

That's why Advocate Health has invested in having a dedicated pediatrics team to staff virtual care offerings, unlike other systems that might use family medicine providers to handle calls for children.

In many areas or at smaller health systems, there might not be enough patient volume to keep a dedicated pediatric team fully busy. Advocate Health's scale and depth of expertise allow for this specialized care.

Children tend to enjoy the virtual connection and are often more comfortable using the technological tools than their parents.

The number of pediatric urgent care visits the health system performed in 2025 was up about 41% to about 30,225 visits in just two years since 2023, the first full year after Advocate Health's strategic combination.

And just this spring, Atrium Health's School-Based Virtual Therapy Program expanded its teletherapy to students in grades five through 12 at schools in Georgia's Crawford, Houston and Peach counties and at The Academy for Classical Education in Bibb County.

Since launching virtual teletherapy in 2020, Advocate Health has grown to provide care to students in more than 300 schools across the Southeast, including 60 schools in Georgia.

That means more children are getting helped, and their parents are, too.

"So much of wellness care in the pediatric space is about educating the parent, and we can do a lot of that virtually," Cody said. "Wellness care includes taking on behavioral health concerns. That's obviously a huge concern across the country when you think about pediatric healthcare issues."



“She Even Got to Meet Our New Puppy!”

It's 4 a.m. and your child wakes up with a 102-degree fever. Your mind goes into panic mode as your plans for the day unravel — and the sun hasn't even risen yet. Talk to any parent, and they can likely relate.

Chelsea's Monday wasn't off to a great start, and she worried that trying to get 5-year-old Ellison in to see a pediatrician quickly might not be easy. The flu was going around, and she'd have to wait until her pediatrician's office opened later that morning to try to schedule.

But then Chelsea remembered a colleague mentioning new pediatric virtual primary care options through Atrium Health, where she works. A few clicks later, her day took a turn for the better — she booked a same-day virtual appointment with pediatrician Dr. Mandana Morales at 7:30 a.m.

“Dr. Morales made us feel so comfortable even though we were on the phone with her from our couch,” Chelsea said. “She even got to meet our new puppy!”

Dr. Morales quickly worked with Chelsea to make a plan that would help Ellison feel better soon, including

sending a prescription to the local pharmacy while they were still on the phone.

“I was so relieved. We were able to go from planning to action,” Chelsea said. “The hard part was done, and we could just focus on caring for her. It gave us as much work-life balance as possible.”

Ellison was quickly on the mend and back to school by Wednesday, much earlier than many of her classmates who caught the same virus. Chelsea and her husband, Adam, both completed virtual appointments of their own to help prevent catching the flu, too.

“I was very adamant in trying to get her seen as soon as possible to help her feel better and not have to miss school if she didn't have to,” Chelsea said. “I know that waiting longer to be seen would have negatively impacted how she felt and how long it took for her to recover.”

After this experience, Chelsea encourages everyone to try virtual primary care and said she'll be back to see Dr. Morales again.



Ellison, left, was quickly on the mend from the case of the flu thanks to a convenient virtual appointment that her mom, Chelsea, set up.

Finding a Voice Through Virtual Speech Therapy

Three years ago, Evelin was told her son, Kayden, would likely never be able to talk.

Now 6 years old, his vocabulary has flourished, and he's reading at a second-grade level — largely thanks to virtual speech therapy.

Born in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kayden spent most of his first year at home and wasn't meeting typical speech-language milestones at 12 months. When he started childcare and still wasn't speaking at 18 months, his parents decided to seek professional help.

For years, they rotated through specialists and therapists but never felt like they received the support they needed. At age 3, Kayden wasn't talking, though he appeared to understand others. A few months later, he started saying basic words. By age 4, he continued to progress, but his language remained very limited.

In 2025, Kayden's pediatrician referred him to a virtual speech therapy program through Atrium Health. Evelin had her doubts at first. Would Kayden be able to stay focused? How much meaningful progress could be made through a screen?

After an initial evaluation with Kayden's speech-language pathologist, Chaundra, she and her husband decided it was worth a try.

"Chaundra knew my son had a lot of potential, and she quickly recognized the areas where he needed the most help and how to keep him engaged," Evelin said. "She's compassionate, patient and truly takes the time to connect with him. His sessions are amazing to watch."

Using interactive games and creative activities, Chaundra has made learning fun for Kayden, often incorporating his interests — cars, airplanes, dinosaurs and reading — into his lessons. Each session is personalized and thoughtfully planned, targeting Kayden's specific improvement areas while also adapting to his mood and energy each day.

The convenience has been a gamechanger, as well. Without distance as a barrier, Kayden has been eager to join every session, whether he and his family are out of town, home sick with a cold or juggling a busy day.

"One of the biggest surprises has been just how beneficial online therapy is for Kayden. Being in the comfort of his own home has allowed him to feel relaxed and secure, which has helped him open up and participate more freely," Evelin said in a letter praising Chaundra and the program.

"The virtual format has also made it easy for us as parents to observe, learn strategies and reinforce techniques throughout the week," she continued. "What initially felt like a limitation has truly become a strength."

In turn, Kayden's speech has blossomed. A recent evaluation shows his vocabulary is above average for his age, and his reading comprehension, sentence structure and articulation have improved drastically. His parents have also seen a noticeable difference in how he interacts with others.

"The progress he has made has been remarkable. We've seen noticeable improvements not only in his speech clarity, but also in his confidence and willingness to communicate," Evelin said in the letter. "He is more expressive, more eager to initiate conversations and prouder of himself when he succeeds."

“

The virtual format has also made it easy for us as parents to observe, learn strategies and reinforce techniques throughout the week. What initially felt like a limitation has truly become a strength.”

EVELIN
Kayden's mom

“It Really Blows My Mind What You Can Do”

Physical therapy is perhaps not the most obvious candidate for virtual health services — the word “physical” is right there in the name.

But it’s clearly catching on.



In just the Charlotte area alone, Advocate Health conducted 173 virtual physical therapy appointments in 2024. In 2025, it completed more than 2,300 – a number the system was set to eclipse by the spring of 2026.

“We live in a very tactile part of healthcare, right? With physical therapy, you’re used to understanding a patient’s issues using your hands,” Jankuski said.

“But we can see over video how a patient is doing, see how well they’re moving and what needs to change, visualize if they’re having balance issues and if they’re a

fall risk. It really blows my mind what you can do and the great results you can get.”

For patients, the benefits are numerous. In addition to the convenience of not having to go into an office, it can be far easier to get an appointment.

Plus, much of physical therapy is about coaching – showing patients how to perform exercises on their own and then helping them understand how to improve their movement. That can be done effectively over video, making specialized therapy available to patients who might not have an in-person provider nearby. Patients in rural areas can save time, energy and money by avoiding long trips to get the care they need.

“So now every small town has access to the deepest expertise in our profession as possible,” Jankuski said. “And that’s something that you couldn’t get even two or three years ago.”

Rewriting the Future of Brain Health



Dr. Gitelman

For Dr. Darren Gitelman, advancing memory care has always been rooted in possibility — ensuring people get the right care at the right time, in ways that meet them where they are.

As a behavioral neurologist at the Advocate Memory Center, Dr. Gitelman has spent his career connecting research, education and clinical practice with a clear purpose: delivering exceptional, compassionate care that makes a meaningful difference for patients and their families.

“You’re always thinking about how to make life better for that person and their family, whether that’s identifying concerns earlier, preventing future problems or connecting them to the newest and most effective treatments,” he shared.

That philosophy helped shape the Memory Health project, an innovative, virtual-first approach to the early detection and diagnosis of cognitive decline.

By combining digital screening tools, virtual evaluations and close collaboration with primary care teams, the program reflects a broader effort to redefine care — reducing wait times, closing gaps in diagnosis and reaching patients where it’s most convenient for them.



For Dr. Gitelman, it’s about access as much as innovation: addressing a condition that remains widely underdiagnosed and stigmatized while connecting more patients to timely, expert care.

Dr. Gitelman emphasizes that collaboration and support within the Memory Center and throughout Advocate Health have made this program possible.

“All of this work reflects the ideas and dedication of dozens of people across the enterprise, and leadership’s understanding of the importance of what we’re trying to achieve for brain health,” he said.

“All of this work reflects the ideas and dedication of dozens of people across the enterprise, and leadership’s understanding of the importance of what we’re trying to achieve for brain health.” **DR. DARREN GITELMAN**



Sleep Care, Reimagined

Those who have undergone an overnight sleep study in a healthcare facility know how much more comfortable the experience could be if it were conducted at home.

Advocate Health understands patients sleep best in their own beds, which allows data to be gathered in a more natural environment. That's why a full range of sleep services — including new patient appointments, home sleep apnea tests, follow-up visits, CPAP machine education appointments and CPAP adherence checks — can all be delivered virtually.

In-home sleep apnea tests are shipped directly to patients' homes. The morning after the at-home study, data is sent to sleep providers for interpretation. A member of the care team then follows up with the patient to review the results and discuss next steps.

If treatment is recommended (often a CPAP machine), the patient receives instructions outlining the care plan, including access to a link that uses AI to measure their face and determine the best-fitting CPAP mask.

The CPAP machine and supplies are then shipped to the patient's home, followed by a virtual visit with a clinician to learn how to properly operate the device.

"When patients are using their CPAP machine correctly, they feel better. And that's what this is all about — really helping people feel better," said Denise Keefe, senior vice president of continuing health for Advocate Health. "We've come so far from having patients who had to travel to a lab and sleep overnight. This is transformational change."

Many patients living with sleep apnea also have other chronic conditions that make it difficult to travel to a sleep center for testing and appointments. Eliminating trips helps address those barriers, including challenges with transportation or mobility. Treating sleep apnea can also help patients better manage those conditions.

Advocate Health sleep clinicians report improved appointment adherence by offering services virtually, which means more patients are receiving the care they need to live fully.

A Strong Connection Made Virtually

Dr. Melissa Sifuentes, interim medical director for Advocate Health's Illinois-Wisconsin Virtual Primary Care Team, expands access to care for patients whose lives leave little room for themselves.

As a physician providing virtual primary care, Dr. Sifuentes sees patients carrying heavy loads – packed work and family schedules, managing care for loved ones with complex needs and the quiet guilt of putting their own health last.

“I feel a strong connection with my patients, even though we’re not meeting in person,” said Dr. Sifuentes, who is based in Chicago. “The conversations we have are meaningful, and there’s so much you can pick up through the camera, whether it’s their tone, the words they choose or simply being invited into their personal space. All of these details give insight you might not expect.”

Through the screen, Dr. Sifuentes gains insight into patients’ lives, builds trust and creates a safe space that makes it easier for patients to open up about mental health or personal challenges or simply communicate better.

“I had an autistic patient who was non-verbal and utilized a detailed conversation board that his mother built on an entire wall in their home,” Dr. Sifuentes said. “Obviously, it’s not possible to bring something like that with you in a traditional clinic setting. Since we met virtually, the caregiver used the conversation board so we could have a bit more communication during our appointment.”

As the interim medical director for the Illinois-Wisconsin virtual primary care team, Dr. Sifuentes has felt a real sense of excitement around how virtual health is redefining care for all.

“Everything is so new and evolving, and we’re getting the chance to help define what it looks like,” she said.

“

I feel a strong connection with my patients, even though we’re not meeting in person. The conversations we have are meaningful, and there’s so much you can pick up through the camera, whether it’s their tone, the words they choose or simply being invited into their personal space. All of these details give insight you might not expect.”

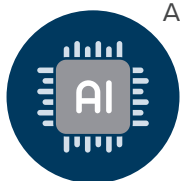
DR. MELISSA SIFUENTES
Interim Medical Director for the
Illinois-Wisconsin Virtual Primary Care
Team for Advocate Health



Staying on the Leading Edge

The Challenge

All of these new programs and tools are helping Advocate Health better serve its patients, but in a rapidly evolving landscape, staying current today can mean falling behind tomorrow.



Advancements in technology and AI are reshaping healthcare, with new breakthroughs and tools emerging almost daily. As a result, many organizations are left scrambling to solve problems with solutions that can quickly become obsolete.

While some patients may be skeptical of AI tools, consumers and providers are increasingly comfortable embracing smart technology to simplify their healthcare experience. In turn, their expectations are rising.

As a health system, dipping a proverbial toe into the AI waters isn't sufficient. Strategically — and responsibly — incorporating AI-driven solutions to improve care delivery and support patient and employee retention is critical.

Patients who fear losing face-to-face interactions with trusted providers need guidance and support as they adapt to the benefits AI can bring to their experience.

It's also critical to support and build a workforce of the future — one that is comfortable with the pace of change and the possibilities new tools offer both clinicians and patients.

The Advocate Way

Advocate Health is using its scale and resources to anticipate what's next — and to put tomorrow's tools to work today to help patients live healthier lives.

The health system is taking a proactive approach, investing in these tools to help more patients now, not later.

"We're not done. We're continuing to go," Dr. Anderson said. "Part of that is organizing the workforce to focus specifically on virtual health. Another part of that is how you bring the suites of technology together."

For example, in December 2025, Advocate Health used a conversational AI tool to call more than 15,000 patients who have high blood pressure to check in on them. Hypertension is often called a "silent killer" because it can present with few symptoms but cause other serious health

complications. Helping patients keep their blood pressure under control is critical to helping them stay healthy.

An AI agent made the phone calls and led patients through a series of prompts to take their blood pressure and report the reading. Making that many phone calls in just 12 days would have taken humans far longer.

In that time, about 274 patients were found to have abnormal blood pressure readings and were offered traditional follow-up care. Another 1,200 patients were cleared with normal blood pressure.

Based in part on the results of this pilot, Advocate Health is scaling the program later in the year.

"This, for us, feels like a very tangible example of separating through the hype of where AI can really change healthcare experiences for our patients and improve outcomes," Dr. Andy McWilliams, vice president of AI clinical product development and co-chair of AI governance at Advocate Health, told Becker's Hospital Review.¹¹

When it comes to AI, the health system has been a pioneer in the field. Atrium Health was the first system in the country to partner with Microsoft on its hands-free documentation platform, Dragon Copilot.

“

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DR. ANDY MCWILLIAMS

Vice President of AI Clinical Product Development and Co-Chair of AI Governance at Advocate Health

continued on next page

The tool automatically transcribes a clinician's conversation with a patient and generates a draft note directly in the electronic health record for the physician to review and edit. This allows clinicians to spend less time documenting and more time actively listening and engaging with patients.

By reducing administrative burden and lowering burnout rates among doctors and nurses, this technology also helps Advocate Health achieve its mission to be the Best Place to Care. It's returning the joy of practicing medicine and helping providers reconnect with why they entered their professions in the first place: to care for people.

Advocate Health isn't implementing AI-powered technologies for technology's sake. Every application of AI must contribute to the system's goals of improving care delivery and patient outcomes.

After a rigorous review process, technologies that don't clear Advocate Health's standards for safety, security, reliability, transparency and impact are abandoned. As of 2025, Advocate Health had rejected about five out of every six use cases for AI it evaluated.¹²

"We're usually in the pioneer status or early development partners with a lot of our partner vendor solutions," Andy Crowder, senior vice president and chief digital and AI officer of Advocate Health, told Becker's Hospital Review. "And that really gives us the ability to craft and model the solutions in a way that we believe is appropriate for us."

In March 2026, Advocate Health received grants from The Duke Endowment that included \$815,000 to enable Atrium Health to pilot a generative AI platform that helps cancer care teams understand complex genomic information — making care more efficient and accessible for high-need communities.

As with virtual tools, Advocate Health's approach to AI is grounded in connection — ensuring that the people who need care most are identified and connected to the right clinicians. In the hypertension pilot, the AI tool helped identify patients with high blood pressure and refer them to appropriate follow-up care.

"We can't forget why we're doing it — why it's so important for us to continually redefine the future of healthcare," Advocate Health Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Scott Rissmiller wrote of AI in the *Journal of Healthcare Management*.

"We're doing it for our patients, so they can live longer, happier, healthier lives as a result of improved care," he continued. "We're doing it for the doctors and other providers so they have more time and energy to provide that care — and to have those chats about nothing in particular that might make a patient more comfortable, even in the toughest of times."¹³

“

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DR. SCOTT RISSMILLER

Chief Clinical Officer at Advocate Health



Up and Away

Caring for patients at home doesn't have to happen only online.



In 2027, Advocate Health will launch the nation's largest hospital-based drone delivery network, transforming how many of its patients receive prescriptions and home health supplies, while also reducing turnaround time for lab results, which are vital to timely diagnosis and treatment.

Through a contract with Zipline, Advocate Health will bring this vision to life, underscoring its leadership in using technology to improve patient experience and operational efficiency. At full scope and following all regulatory processes, Advocate Health will drone-deliver prescriptions, labs and medical supplies in three of its markets, carrying out more than 100,000 deliveries annually.

The first flight will deploy in 2027 in the Charlotte area, then expand to Chicago and Milwaukee. There are also plans to deploy the technology in Georgia as Advocate Health continues its commitment to increasing rural patients' access to high-quality care.

"Advocate Health is rewiring care delivery by implementing drone technology to deliver medication and health supplies," said Collin Lane, Advocate Health executive vice president, professional and support services, which includes pharmacy and lab functions.

"This technology will ensure patients not only have the prescriptions and supplies they need, but have them delivered right to their doorsteps, and during a time when their local pharmacy may be closed."

The delivery process starts when an order, such as a prescription, lab specimen or medical supply, is picked up by a Zipline drone at an Advocate Health site.

Zipline's electric drone then quietly flies to its destination, whether it's a patient's doorstep or another Advocate Health facility. Upon arrival, the drone hovers up to 300 feet in the air while a pod carrying the order descends to the ground on a tether. The pod makes precise deliveries even in high wind and bad weather conditions, leaving the order behind while it flies back to charge for its next delivery.

For Advocate Health patients, this service offers a quick, secure and safe way to receive medications and supplies at home.

"Thanks to our vision to always think differently to best meet the needs of our communities, we are transforming how patients access prescription medications and home health supplies while improving efficiency of lab deliveries across our markets," Lane said. "Advocate Health is excited to lead the way in harnessing the latest technology to improve outcomes for our patients."



Photo credit: Zipline

Conclusion

At its best, virtual care isn't about technology — it's about access, connection and trust. It connects real patients and clinicians in moments that matter, delivering expert care, guidance and reassurance wherever it's needed.

These virtual tools are not a passing trend, and Advocate Health is not waiting to see where the future leads — it's actively shaping it, with a deep commitment to finding and deploying technologies that help more people today.

"We're pushing the bounds of what is possible with a commitment to quality and safety," Dr. Anderson said. "We're looking at how technology is advancing and asking how we are integrating these revolutionary tools into the great care we already provide."

"People need lots of different kinds of care. Our superpower is that we connect all the dots. We connect you in person. We connect you virtually. We get you the

excellent care you need, no matter where you are. We're really challenging the idea of what an integrated delivery system is."

As an integrated health system, Advocate Health is uniquely positioned to meet patients' full range of healthcare needs — not just one-off requests as many digital startups do. And with the depth of expertise and experience that comes with the system's scale, Advocate Health is able to expand virtual health offerings with the goal of helping more people live healthier lives.

"We're out there trying new things, trying to lead the way," McColl said. "Maybe not every single program we try will work, but we're walking the walk. We're innovating because that's what our patients need us to do."

Advocate Health views the evolution of technology and virtual care not simply as an opportunity, but as a responsibility — to expand high-quality, accessible care for all.



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