The Future of Care Delivered Today

GENERAL OVERVIEW

As in many other sectors, the role of technology in health care is rapidly evolving. Various health care payers are grappling with new health care delivery methods, and patients are adapting to novel ways to interact with their physicians. Kaiser Permanente utilizes telehealth technology – telecommunications-based services that can increase quality, offer convenience and choice, meet patient needs in clinically appropriate ways, and enable collaboration among physicians – throughout a diverse set of care settings. In and out of the exam room, Permanente physicians use extensive voice, video, online, and mobile technologies to connect with their patients and each other to support integrated, patient-centered care that leads the nation in health care quality and innovation.

Across Kaiser Permanente, approximately half of all “touches” between patients and care teams were virtual in 2017, including secure emails between patients and clinicians and appointments conducted by phone or video. Additionally, Kaiser Permanente patients in 2017 performed more than 70 million care-related transactions online or through the company’s web and mobile application, including viewing lab results, ordering prescriptions, and scheduling appointments.

How Kaiser Permanente Addresses This Issue

Permanente physicians are pioneers at using integrated and extensive voice, video, online, and mobile technologies to deliver culturally-responsive, patient-empowered care. Scheduled telephone visits enable patients to discuss their health concerns with their clinician when an in-person visit is not clinically necessary. Integrated video visit capabilities allow patients to access urgent, primary, and specialty care – when clinically appropriate – based on their health needs and preferences. Individuals who select telephone and video visits have reported high levels of satisfaction with both care modalities. Importantly, these services are supported by the patient’s comprehensive electronic health record that the physician can access at the point of care.

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Remote monitoring for patients with chronic conditions offers significant promise to improve quality outcomes. Care teams at the Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group monitor blood pressure for patients with hypertension, and the Southern California Permanente Medical Group has begun testing remote glucose monitoring technology to manage blood sugar levels in patients. Remote monitoring offers the opportunity to improve quality and clinical outcomes, recognizing that patients with ongoing chronic conditions spend limited time in doctors’ offices.

Care delivery leaders are working to spread Kaiser Permanente’s core set of existing capabilities more broadly across all regions, including system-wide smartphone usage that enables physicians and care team members to access telehealth apps. For example, some apps allow physicians to text each other about clinical cases and receive prompt advice for a patient’s ongoing care without compromising patient privacy and security. Other apps provide access to vital information that supports clinical decision-making at the point of care.

Selected Publications


On the Horizon

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About the Permanente Medical Groups

The Permanente Medical Groups are composed of more than 22,000 physicians dedicated to the mission of improving the health of our patients and the communities in which we provide care. We practice in eight self-governed, physician-led, prepaid, multispecialty medical groups. Together with the Kaiser Foundation Health Plans and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, we are Kaiser Permanente – an award-winning health care system that delivers Permanente Medicine to more than 12.2 million Kaiser Permanente members. We work collaboratively, enabled by state-of-the-art facilities and technology, to provide preventive and world-class complex care in eight states – from Hawaii to Maryland – and the District of Columbia.