

Telehealth strategies: Making virtual nursing profitable.

Nurses are eager and willing to work in virtual settings, but most health systems are still working to develop virtual care models that are both cost-effective and efficient. Healthcare organizations should consider the following when integrating nurses into virtual care.

Expanding capabilities

The investment many healthcare facilities made in telehealth technology during the pandemic has opened new opportunities within workflows for virtual nursing.

Simple, routine tasks. Telehealth nursing has historically consisted mostly of phone calls: following up after hospital care, providing patient education, and sharing test results. During the pandemic, virtual nurses also began doing intakes, discharges, and simple charting, among other routine tasks.

Rounding and remote monitoring. New EMR technology allows rounding to be done virtually. Additionally, tech embedded into many patient rooms enables remote patient monitoring in real time. Nurses can communicate with the patient and access data from monitoring devices.

Home hospital care. Remote monitoring – sometimes called tele-sitting – has accelerated development of the home hospital model. With technology placed in their homes, patients can be discharged earlier and monitored remotely by a virtual nurse. This can also help avoid trips into the hospital for follow-up care.

Making virtual nursing cost-effective

Virtual physician care is billable, making telehealth visits with a physician a revenue generator. For virtual nursing, it's all about realizing efficiencies and cost savings. Virtual nursing can help:

- Save overtime expenses as the virtual team takes pressure off the in-person workforce
- Facilitate discharges to free up beds for new patients
- Cover care gaps to keep beds open and maintain patient volumes

Make virtual nursing cost-effective

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- Facilitate discharges
- Cover care gaps





Challenges of virtual nursing

Potential use cases for virtual nursing are becoming clear, but organizations are still working to overcome some challenges:

- Workflows have not been completely mapped yet
- In some cases, nursing units have been slow to adopt it as a natural part of their workflow
- Not all patients are comfortable with virtual care – some still expect to see someone face to face in a hospital setting

Staffing telehealth with travel nurses

For routine nursing tasks, a virtual nursing pool may be adequate. However, travel nurses may be a better fit for supporting virtual care when you need:

- A full-time resource placed within a unit
- A longer-term member of the care delivery team
- Nurses to work within your own software systems
- A virtual resource that frees up your regular staff to focus on in-person care

Virtual nursing is the future of virtual care

Virtual nursing is still in its infancy, but nurses will play an integral role as virtual care becomes more widely adopted. Expanding the role of nurses in your telehealth program can:

- Help optimize workflow for your in-person care team
- Allow staff nurses to focus more on rewarding, high-value work
- Relieve pressure on overstretched units

Healthcare facilities that figure out how to best leverage nurses as part of their virtual care program will be the winners with both patients and their workforce alike.

CHG Healthcare can help you staff your telehealth program with locum tenens providers and travel nurses. Give us a call at [866.588.5996](tel:866.588.5996) or email ecs.contact@chghealthcare.com.