

Center for Health Transformation Releases White Paper on Value of Telemedicine and the Role of Telephonic Medical Consults

A position paper validating the importance of telemedicine and the role of telephonic medical consults to improve access, lower costs and enhance the quality of healthcare for all Americans has been released today by The Center for Health Transformation (CHT). Co-authored by Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and founder of CHT; Rick Boxer, M.D., healthcare policy analyst; and Byron Brooks, M.D., telemedicine expert, *“Telephone Medical Consults Answer the Call for Accessible, Affordable and Convenient Healthcare,”* articulates the merits of telephonic communications between physicians and patients and substantiates the benefits for consumers, health plans, employers, government and other payers.

“Telephone Medical Consults Answer the Call for Accessible, Affordable and Convenient Healthcare,” is available for download at <http://www.healthtransformation.net/galleries/default-file/Teladoc.pdf>.

“Americans expect and deserve high quality, accessible health care services,” says Speaker Newt Gingrich. “Telemedicine will play an increasingly central role in getting the right care at the right time to individuals and families. Federal, state, and local governments must facilitate the spread of this important option by tearing down barriers to its use.”

While physicians have relied upon telephone consults for decades as a means of connecting with patients, only recently has the concept been implemented on a national basis. Today, this model addresses illnesses that arise quickly and tend to run a brief course, typically 5-10 days. This approach is particularly effective for acute, routine, episodic, self-limited and minor illnesses. With the use of a freely available portable medical record, these telephonic patient encounters support continuity of patient care and the evolution of a patient’s medical home.

TelaDoc Medical Services, which currently serves more than 1.2 million members, was used as a model for understanding the concept of telephonic medical consults. The company provides an example for innovators that any free enterprise organization can produce similar results.

Success metrics for the telephonic medical consult model include:

- Rapid access to a primary care physician via telephone.
- Telephonic cross coverage to handle acute, episodic, self-limited and minor illnesses
- Fully portable Electronic Health Record (EHR) for both patients and physicians, with fully CCR-compliant data structure.
- Availability to patients with pre-existing conditions
- Affordability and price transparency

“Healthcare in America has been enhanced by remarkable research to find new answers to age-old medical problems,” says Dr. Boxer. “However, potentially the weakest link is that between the doctor and the patient. Telemedicine bridges the gap between theoretical availability and realistic accessibility. By linking the patient to a primary care

doctor 24/7/365, telemedicine brings rapid access of health care to the patient with an urgent need.”

The telephone cross-coverage model, whereby physicians “cover” for one another via the telephone on a round-the-clock basis, emerges as one of the best examples of the power of telemedicine to make medical care more accessible and convenient to patients while maintaining quality and reducing costs. It is a straightforward approach, one that relies upon simple technology -- the telephone: a mobile ubiquitous staple in nearly every household or office in both urban and rural communities and one that is familiar, easy-to-use, and can be widely utilized without special training or orientation.

Dr. Brooks expresses his personal perspective, adding, “It is my hope that this paper helps healthcare policy makers to understand what more than a million Americans and their physicians have come to know: telephonic consultations with physicians are valuable and a needed addition to our strained health care system.”

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About the Center for Health Transformation

The Center for Health Transformation is a high-impact collaboration of private and public sector leaders committed to creating a 21st Century Intelligent Health System that saves lives and saves money for all Americans. The Center is a for-profit, bi-partisan membership-based organization with over 100 members who participate in member meetings, collaborative workshops, training sessions and workgroups, and projects such as the Healthy Georgia Project, Ending Cancer as a Cause of Death, Developing a Roadmap to Cure Alzheimer’s, Affordable Coverage for All Americans, Diabetes Transformation, etc. For more information, visit www.healthtransformation.net.