

# UMMC Center for Telehealth + VSee: Urgent Care Telehealth for Mississippi Employees

## 1 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

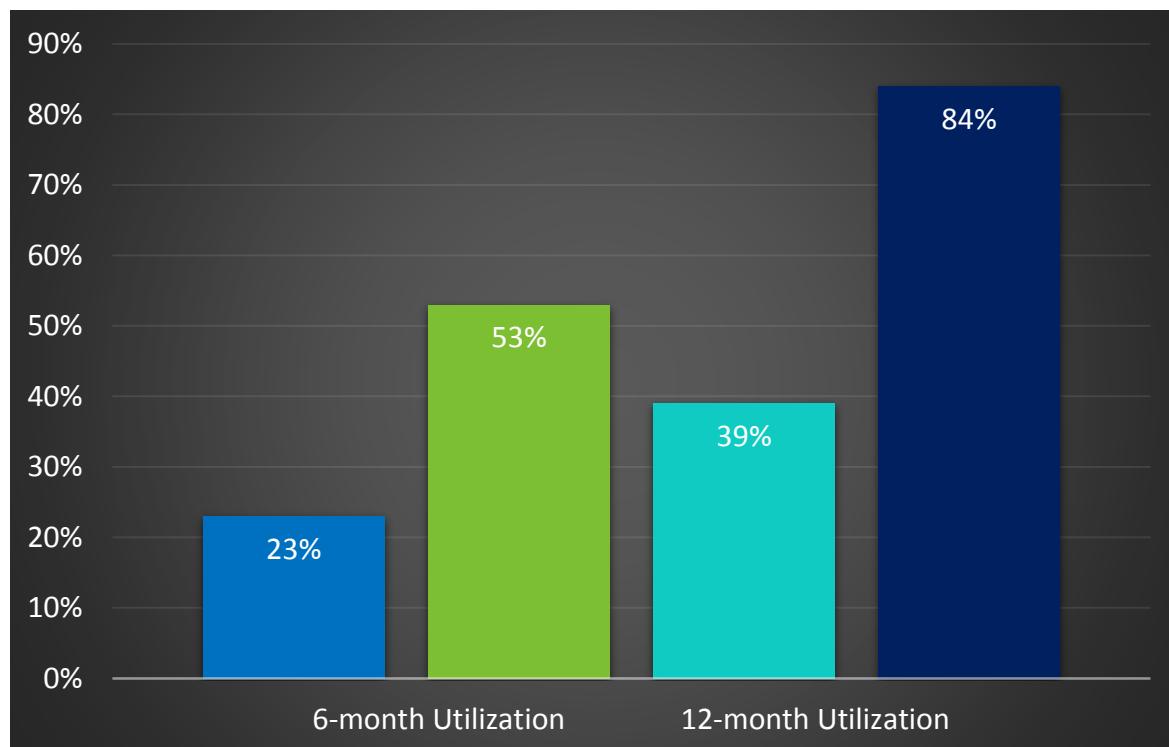
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The Center for Telehealth at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) provides corporations and colleges with affordable, convenient urgent care for the employees. Putting healthcare access points in corporations and colleges allows an employee to get health care when and where they need it. If healthcare is not accessible, the employee either chooses to not see a healthcare provider at all for their health needs, delays care possibly allowing a non-urgent condition to progress or the employee may choose to use the more costly emergency room for minor care. All three scenarios bring unnecessary and extensive health care costs. This costs in turn affects the employer's healthcare expenses. The goal of our telehealth services is to impact healthcare outcomes and lower healthcare costs.

## 2 BY THE NUMBERS

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UMMC's telehealth service for corporations and colleges now covers more than 5,000 employees in just the first year and a half of service. We have seen our highest utilization among manufacturing corporations and banking corporations. The diagram below is an example of utilization among four different corporations in four diverse areas of our state, including rural and metropolitan.



## 3 RESULTS & FEEDBACK

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With a flat Per Member Per Month (PMPM) fee for unlimited visits, the average telehealth visit saves an employee \$262 each time they choose to use the UMMC telehealth service instead of an acute care consult. The employer also sees significant cost savings. On average, a 12-month cost savings for a corporation with 500 employees substituting a telehealth visit for an \$128 acute care visit is \$16,060. This average cost savings does not include the supplementary benefits such as the wait time that exists to get an health care appointment for the urgent care visit nor does it include the cost savings associated with productivity loss due to time away from work. An extended wait time could potentially cause the employee to suffer more severe symptoms due to the lapse before getting treatment.

## 4 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

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Most of our clients choose to provide their employees with our telehealth service as a health care benefit. Employers today are more and more focused on a healthy workforce. A corporation that offers a telehealth benefit to their employees attracts new employees and creates an environment in which there is less turnover. We have already experienced 100% positive feedback rate from employees who have used the UMMC telehealth service.

“I used the new Telehealth System yesterday and it is awesome!! I am a big chicken when it comes to going to the doctor and would probably not have gone if it were not for the new Telehealth System. A big thanks to (our employer) for offering us this new tool in healthcare!!”

**The method of healthcare delivery helped the patient overcome their fear of seeking treatment.**

“This is a great benefit! Because it’s the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, I would have tried to self-medicate with over-the-counter meds and would have waited to go to doctor when the time was more convenient. But, thanks to Telehealth, I was able to go ahead and speak with someone and get the meds I need! It was quick and easy!”

**Telehealth was able to avoid a person from developing a worsening of symptoms due to delay in care.**

“My appointment went great. It wasn't any different than a regular doctor appointment. I actually want to say it was more in depth than a regular doctor appointment because she asked a lot of questions, and she listened to my responses. I didn't feel rushed. It was really nice.”

**Telehealth allowed an environment for the patient to feel more at ease and comfortable when sharing with a healthcare provider.**

“I was told what meds I would get and what to expect. My local drug store was called and on my lunch hour I picked up my prescriptions. Cost of Appointment \$0.00. Cost of three prescriptions \$0.00. On the road to recovery!”

**Telehealth has resulted in high employee satisfaction and provides value-add to a company.**

“I used the new Telehealth program last week and LOVED IT!!! The people that work there were so friendly and it was great not to have to leave work for something small like a sinus infection. I was able

to see the nurse practitioner at 4:40 after we closed and get my prescription called in. The whole process cost me \$8.00 for my two prescriptions and about 15 minutes of time (including getting my meds!).”

**Convenience of the telehealth service allows the employee to seek treatment without time away from work which in turn contributes to productivity gained for an employer who offers telehealth services to their employees.**

## 5 PROVIDER RESPONSE

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Our UMMC healthcare providers are what makes our telehealth service a personalized and professional experience for employees. One of our nurse practitioners was interviewed about her transition from 20 years in the clinical setting to practicing medicine with telehealth.

**What was your initial impression of telehealth/telemedicine when first approached by the idea?**

I was at a seminar and heard a presentation about the numerous telehealth programs currently in place for Mississippi. It really got me thinking about all the possibilities telehealth could offer underserved areas regarding preventative medicine as well as acute care. At that time, I had no idea I would actually get to be a part of our UMMC telehealth program.

**If your first impression is different from how you now feel about telemedicine, what was it that changed your mind?**

If anything, I am more eager to add to our current program. The possibilities are really endless. With blue tooth technology, I am actually able to use an otoscope or stethoscope during the assessment. When you think about it, a Telehealth visit may actually be better a better option for the patient rather than expecting their regular provider to refill a medication or write a new prescription for an uncomplicated medical issue without being seen in the clinic.

**How do you think telemedicine will impact your practice and your ability to provide healthcare to patients?**

I had always worked in a clinical setting so this has been a new experience for me. Obviously, there are advantages to actually being in the room with a patient but there is so much assessment that can be done through careful observation and taking a good history. I find myself less distracted, less hurried and more focused on listening to the patient and carefully noting any unusual findings.

**In what ways would you say that telemedicine services are better for patients compared to the alternative?**

I have noticed that patients seem to seek care earlier for their problem and tend to be more receptive to conservative treatment because of how easy it is to be seen and little, if no cost at all to them. They do not have to miss work, take sick time or expose coworkers to as much illness. The patient may avoid taking unneeded medications or additional charges if they have easy access to follow up care if symptoms change. I think with higher deductibles, limited after hour clinics, and long wait times, Telehealth offers a great option for patients. Telehealth should not replace primary care providers but complement their plan of care by helping patients stay healthy.

### **What fascinates you most about telemedicine?**

In today's world, we want instant access. With the help of cell phones and the internet, we can shop, watch movies, listen to music, communicate with friends, research projects, ect. 24/7. It makes perfect sense that healthcare will follow this trend. Patients will seek convenient, quick, and competent care- when and where they want it. I think Telehealth will do exactly that and exceed expectations.

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The VSee virtual waiting room integrates seamlessly into the UMMC Telehealth service so patients and providers can connect for a video consult anywhere they have internet. With the VSee walk-in workflow, UMMC is able to guarantee same day appointments and virtual walk-ins are always welcomed.

First, a telehealth scheduler greets the walk-in patient almost immediately by video and/or text chat in the VSee virtual waiting room. The telehealth scheduler calendars patient's appointment for the first available telehealth provider or at the time when the patient requests an appointment with the telehealth provider. The telehealth provider and patient both log-in to the VSee virtual clinic room on a desktop or mobile device at the time of the appointment. The telehealth provider greets the patient and begins reviewing medical history and symptoms then assesses the patient and provides a treatment plan. The telehealth provider documents the clinical encounter in the Electronic Medical Record (EMR). The patient has access to a EMR portal where the teleconsultation record can be retrieved. The patient is able to pick up a same-day prescription if needed.

UMMC Telehealth providers refer patients to in-person care when needed. However, these referrals occur only 1% of the time. This referral is required when additional services are needed that cannot be delivered by telehealth, such as laboratory tests or x-ray. That means 99% of the time our telehealth providers are able to provide a treatment plan and have a patient on their way to wellness.

