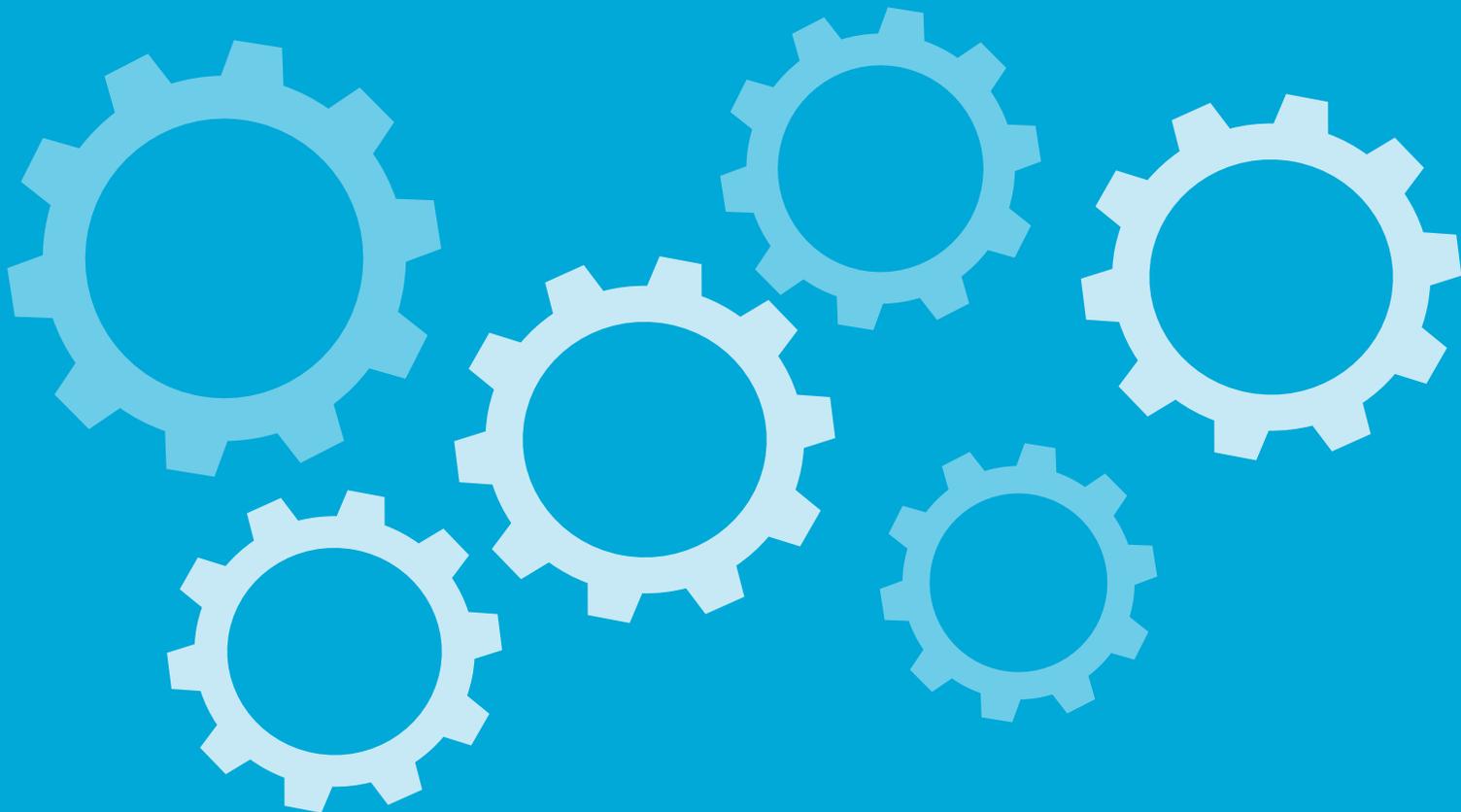


Industry Insights: Reducing Worksite Injury Costs with Occupational Telehealth

UnityPoint Health at Work



The Added Value of Telehealth For Occupational Health

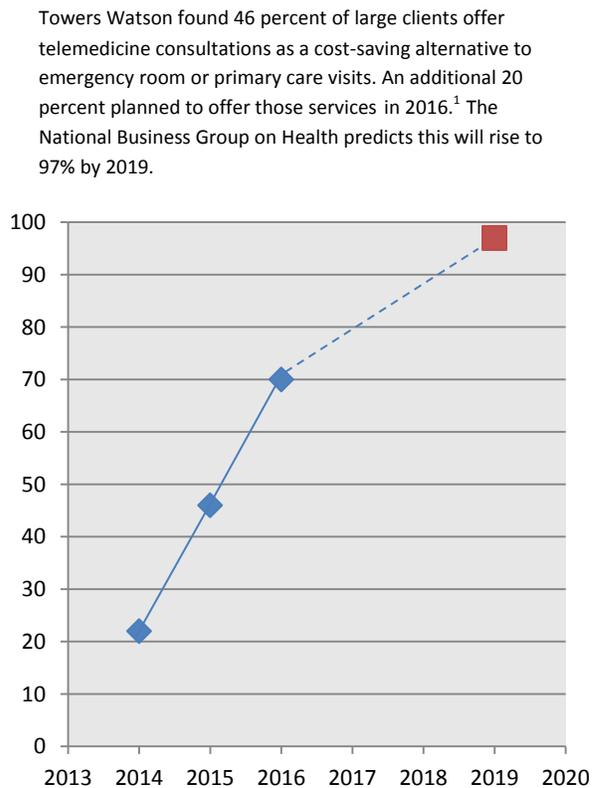
It has been estimated that employers pay almost \$1 billion per week for direct workers' compensation costs alone.¹ Among the options available to employers to reduce these costs, telehealth is rising to the forefront as a viable and practical choice.

Telehealth has become an important avenue for patients seeking convenient, cost effective healthcare. The National Business Group on Health predicts that by 2019, 97% of large employers plan to offer telehealth services to their employees². Many of those services will be focused on general healthcare, addressing common medical conditions.

Clearly, the demand for telehealth for general healthcare is high and growing. Incorporating telehealth into occupational medicine programs may offer unique value and cost savings which exceed the benefits for general healthcare.

As the technology continues to develop, benefits for employers will continue to be discovered. Today, the technology exists to vastly improve a worker's compensation program with little risk and minimal cost.

Figure 1 Actual and Projected Growth for Telehealth since 2013.



Whether it's called Telehealth, Telemedicine or Virtual Care, all of these refer to patients accessing healthcare providers remotely via telephone, video, and other electronic means.

A Brief Look at the History

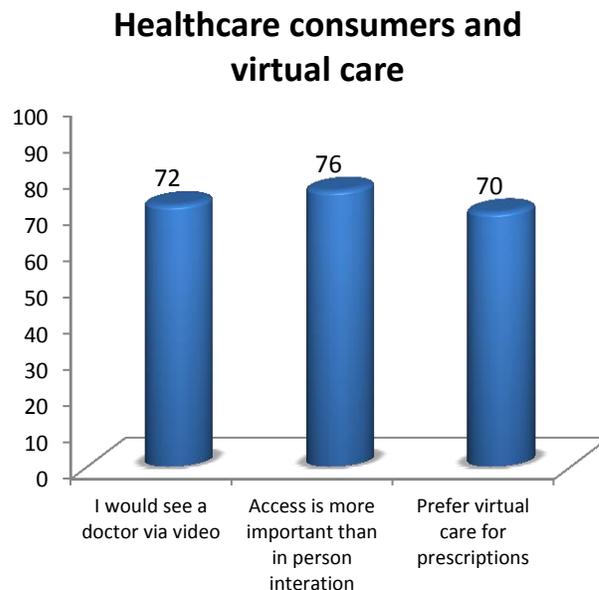
Telehealth in various forms has been around for more than 40 years with demonstrations of hospitals extending care to patients in remote areas. Today there are currently about 200 telemedicine networks, with 3,500 service sites in the US.³

As laws continue to evolve to address the growing market for telehealth services, demand and implementation of services continue to spread quickly. According to the American

Telehealth Association: 30 states and the District of Columbia require that private insurers cover telehealth the same as they would in-person services.

Telehealth is becoming widely accepted among employees. Recent surveys have indicated that a vast majority of workers would prefer a telehealth visit to an in-person visit if it meant increased access.⁴ Patients are currently looking for the fastest and easiest access to care. Millennials especially, actively choose providers who are tech savvy.

Figure 2 Employee acceptance of Telehealth



Real World Telehealth Applications

A recent study by Towers Watson found that **telehealth could save as much as \$6 billion annually** in U.S. healthcare costs. What does it mean for employers trying to mitigate the cost of workplace accidents? A review of common workplace scenarios illustrates exactly how implementing an occupational telehealth program can benefit businesses.

Scenario A – The Employee Working in a Remote Location

Transportation, utility workers, construction, and many other occupations require employees to work in rural areas where access to the nearest medical care is miles away. Often employees are required to work in less than ideal conditions where injuries and illness are common. For example, consider a utility worker who has been sent out to restore power to a rural area. While working in a ditch he develops an itchy rash on his leg. The employee stops what he’s doing and drives into the closest urgent care clinic. UnityPoint Health Occupational Clinics treat numerous cases of contact dermatitis annually that have occurred under very similar circumstances.

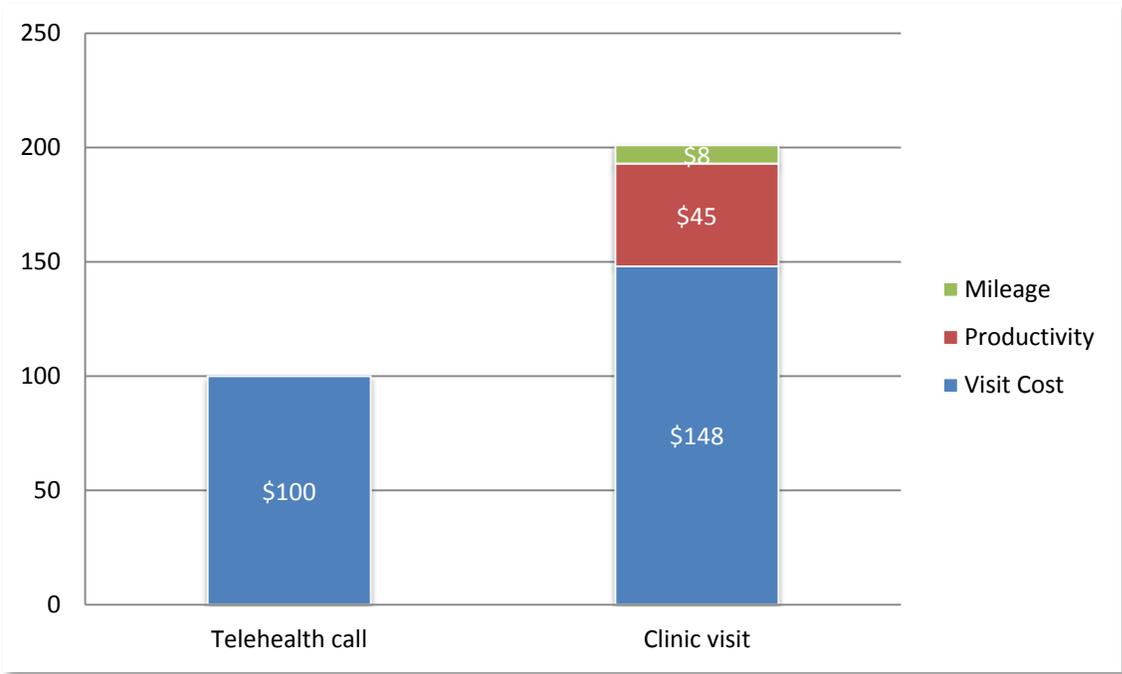


Figure 3 Telehealth cost vs. clinic visit

²Lost productivity travel time for one (1) employee estimated to be a minimum of three (3) hours at an estimated \$15/hour, based on Iowa salary information from salary.com. Mileage has been included at IRS guidelines for medical transport for 40 miles.

However, telehealth provides the employee the option of connecting with an occupational health practitioner who can look at his rash and determine a course of action while the employee remains at the site. The video link also provides the occupational health practitioner the ability to view the conditions the employee is working in, allowing for a more complete diagnosis. Telehealth charges are flat fees, without additional costs for establishing a new patient.

Through the use of a video link, telehealth brings the occupational health practitioner to the employee, allowing for a diagnosis of the condition and a review of the worksite. And the employee never leaves the worksite, eliminating lost productivity and travel time.

Scenario B - Video Job Site Review

Each time an injury occurs, an important step in the evaluation process is the job site review. That can be challenging and costly for employers who do not have someone on staff to perform job site evaluations. A physician's time can be expensive, so eliminating the

Provider time required for Job Review

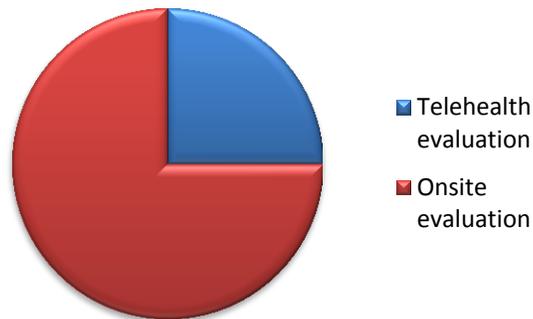


Figure 4 Provider time onsite vs. telehealth

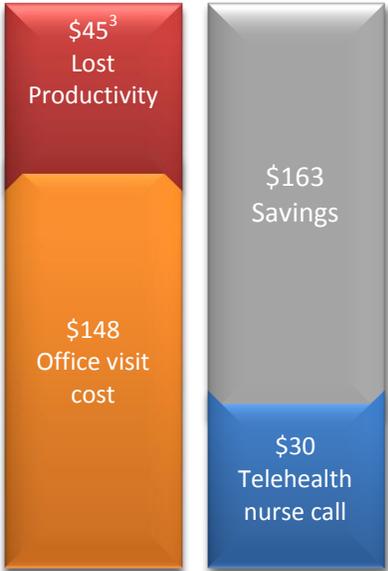
travel time for a provider can save hundreds of dollars depending on the employer's location; a virtual review provides a cost effective solution. When an injury occurs, telehealth allows the occupational health practitioner to view the workstation without the added cost involved in having a provider travel to the site.

Scenario C – Triaged Care

Not every telehealth situation requires immediate additional intervention. Telehealth allows immediate triage of care. For example, when an employee is injured at work and calls for a consultation with UnityPoint Health at Work, they first speak with a triage nurse. The triage nurse provides the first level of care. In some cases no additional intervention is necessary, resulting in additional telehealth savings.

The True Benefit of Telehealth in Occupational Medicine

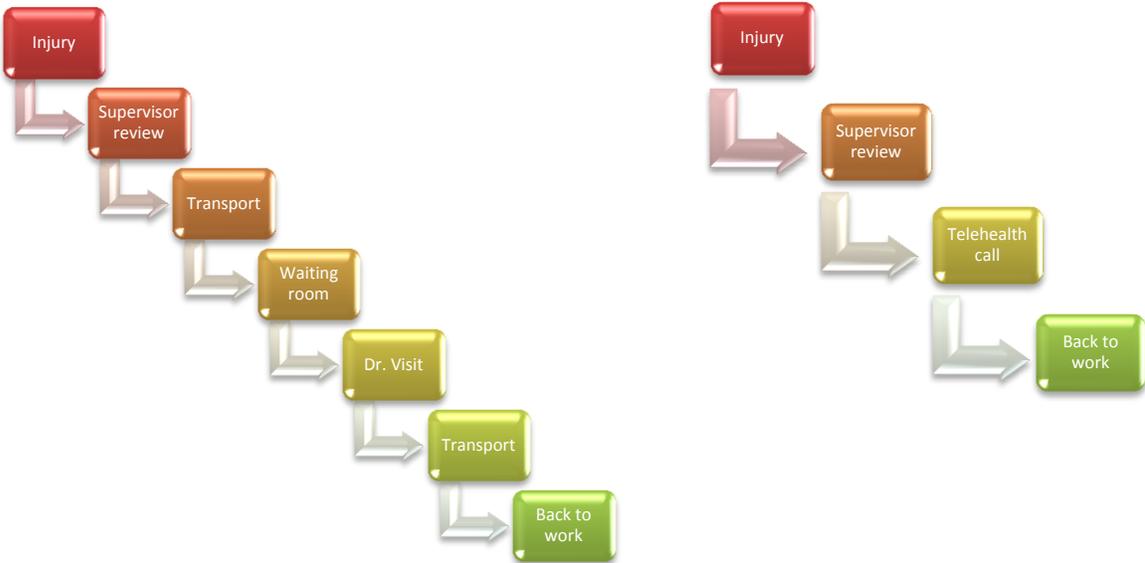
Each of the scenarios described above involved different employers, at different locations with different needs. One thing remains constant: the greatest benefit of telehealth is getting the right level of care faster than ever before. Each step in the process from injury to return to work is costly for employer. With occupational telehealth, the steps from injury to return to work have been reduced to that of the nearest smartphone or computer. Visits that previously cost businesses thousands of dollars each year in lost production now cost much less. The real value of telehealth for any business is demonstrated



³Lost productivity travel time for one (1) employee estimated to be a minimum of three (3) hours at an estimated \$15/hour

Figure 5 Estimated savings for telehealth through UnityPoint Health with nurse call

Figure 6 Reduction in the number of steps back to work under standard approach vs. telehealth



through the following:

Telehealth visits are less expensive.

Telehealth removes the distance between the provider and the need. Production loss and travel time are eliminated.

The Right Level of Care

Patients are triaged by a triage nurse produces even greater savings. Not every injury requires additional intervention from an occupational health practitioner. In many cases, patients can speak with a nurse who can evaluate and treat the patient. This approach assures the patient is receiving the right level of care to match their needs.

On Location

Employers focused on construction, transportation, retail and those in the service industry (among others) all have employees who are not concentrated in one location. Wherever the employee is located, telehealth is a phone call away.

Versatility

The benefits of telehealth for occupational medicine do not stop with the injury. Access to a telehealth physician allows employers to review working conditions immediately, if necessary. This allows the employer to improve conditions and may eliminate the next accident before it occurs. It also allows effective case management and care follow-up from a single location.

Occupational telehealth reduces the space between the provider and the injured, allowing for more convenient service, at a lower cost, at any location.

¹ Willis Towers Watson, based on Washington Business Group on Health 2015 survey

² Comstock, Jonah. "Survey: 9 in 10 Large Employers Will Offer Telehealth next Year." *MobiHealthNews*. N.p., 10 Aug. 2016. Web. 18 Aug. 2016

³ *American Telehealth Association - About Telehealth*. American Telehealth Association, n.d. Web. 17 Aug. 2016.

⁴ Source: Pennic J, "72% of Consumers Are Willing to See a Doctor Via Telehealth Video Conferencing," *HIT Consultant*, December 11, 2013



“We required coordinated Occupational Health nursing services and mobile audiometric testing across our company. The UnityPoint Health at Work team’s attention to detail, concern for quality, and accommodation to our needs made it extremely easy for us to transition these services.”

– *Kelly Konz, RN, BSN, Occupational Health Coordinator, MidAmerican Energy Company*

UnityPoint Health at Work has achieved “Partner” status with John Deere

John Deere has created measurable standards and has a team in place to rate the service levels of their suppliers. “Partner” is the highest level that can be achieved.

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