

THE PERFORMERS

× CANADA'S INFLUENTIAL THOUGHT LEADERS ×

DR. LEWIS LEVY, *Chief Medical Officer, Teladoc Health*



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Dr. Lewis Levy has practiced medicine in the Boston area for more than 30 years, with 20 years as a full-time primary care internist. He also taught at Harvard Medical School and in the internal medicine residency program at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. Currently the chief medical officer for Teladoc Health, a global virtual care provider, he previously held the same role with Best Doctors, well recognized for their expert medical solutions available throughout Canada for more than 30 years. Dr. Levy works with his team of medical directors around the globe to ensure the highest-quality medical standards for virtual care delivery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically increased awareness of virtual care. How is virtual care helping right now?

Being able to access great medical care via virtual care has literally saved lives during this pandemic. With a significant portion of the population quarantined for safety, virtual care has enabled individuals to receive treatment, while protecting healthcare workers and conserving personal protective equipment (PPE), which has become a precious commodity. Because of COVID-19, virtual care has become a primary resource to support physical and mental health. We've seen an increased awareness of virtual care and, with that, increased comfort as more and more people try it out.

As chief medical officer, how do you ensure that Teladoc Health meets its commitment to clinical quality?

We've always set the standard and defined specific clinical quality protocols for the delivery of care virtually. With our diligent oversight, ongoing research and commitment to providing high-quality healthcare to our members, we continue

to advance the practice of virtual care and expand the types of conditions that can be treated virtually. Working closely with our global network of medical directors and medical advisory board, we align the care we provide very specifically to the regulations and realities on the ground in each country and region. In Canada, our physician network is certified and licensed by the College of Family Physicians of Canada to ensure our members can count on receiving the highest quality of care.

How do you motivate your team to continue leading innovation in the virtual care space?

Our global footprint provides our team with unique data and insights that allow us to remain at the forefront of virtual care innovation. This same data and analytics also allow us to streamline care and drive better patient outcomes. One part of my job that I find personally inspiring is getting out and seeing how different the world is if you're in Melbourne or Mumbai or Madrid. I enjoy visiting our offices around the world and connecting with the local medical community to see where there are

perceived needs and where Teladoc Health can make a difference.

How can plan sponsors and plan members benefit from one comprehensive virtual care solution that provides telemedicine, mental health and complex care?

What's so critical in care delivery is enabling patients to access quality care on their terms and navigate the healthcare system as easily as possible. Providing a spectrum of care options through one source enables both plan sponsors and plan members to easily access the support they need to resolve a broad array of healthcare issues – from episodic general medical issues such as the flu and upper respiratory infections, to mental health, to expert advice on complex health issues such as cancer and orthopedic issues. Especially in COVID-related times, it's important for members to be able to access these services virtually to keep themselves and their families safe.

How can plan sponsors better support plan members with mental health issues?

A recent study by Teladoc Health shows that COVID-19 has had a startling effect on Canadians in the workplace, with half of survey respondents reporting their mental health has been negatively affected by the pandemic.

Additionally, 39% of respondents indicated their employers have responded to COVID-19 with support and resources for their mental health. While nearly four in 10 employers proactively helping is a good start, there is still work to be done creating appropriate mental health resources in the workplace. Employers can normalize the conversation about mental health and pull away some of the stigma commonly associated with mental health disorders. By leading the mental health conversation and by providing access to quality treatment via virtual care, plan sponsors are giving their population the tools needed to get better. Virtual care can provide the confidentiality employees desire when they're struggling with mental health issues. It means timely support on the patient's terms.

What's next for virtual care? How do you see it evolving in the coming years?

I believe virtual care will continue to provide relief to a very strained traditional healthcare system by delivering high-quality care to plan members. We can't take out gallbladders or fix broken bones virtually, so for virtual care to meet its fullest potential, it must integrate seamlessly with physical care. The virtual visit, in many ways, is an entry point. Then we can bring the care into the physical setting as needed.

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Virtual care is truly the great equalizer. It enables everyone – regardless of location – to access care. Recently the COVID-19 pandemic has created an awakening across the healthcare system for patients and providers alike. Providers are recognizing that virtual care really works, and patients love the quality and convenience it offers. I believe the pandemic has advanced virtual care adoption by five to 10 years, and I expect to see a significant increase in virtual care participation going forward.

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