

WHITEPAPER

# Entering the Age of Virtual Healthcare



# Video conferencing for virtual clinics and GP video consultations

The Healthcare Industry is having to rethink traditional models of providing care and critically assess modern technology to deliver services with the demands in the wake of the pandemic. This is a critical time to understand the benefits of video conferencing for healthcare and invest in the right solutions that provide safety, usability and efficacy.

While digital health transformation was already well underway to reduce costs and drive efficiencies across the healthcare sector, changes have been put in place urgently due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic. New protocols have been adapted to keep health care workers safe while also ensuring patient safety and care.

The use of video conferencing has advanced at a rapid rate since the beginning of the outbreak across all industries, with healthcare being no exception. It became apparent from the onset of the pandemic that hospitals and practitioners would need to quickly find

means of screening, consulting and treating patients, while limiting physical contact as much as possible to keep facilities from being overwhelmed and reduce exposure between the sick and the healthy.

Where video conferencing may have been seen primarily as a quick and secure solution for internal communication among back office workers, it has quickly emerged as the leading mechanism to continue patient care during COVID-19 through Virtual Clinics and GP Video Consultations for patients and healthcare providers.

## The NHS Long Term Plan (LTP)

Before the pandemic, the NHS had been under significant pressure to improve efficiency and heighten patient engagement. The opportunity to empower patients to take more ownership of their own health and care, whilst reducing the cost of healthcare services has been fast tracked due to the pandemic. With 1.3 million staff, the NHS now has to embrace digital technologies to better manage its workload, redesign clinical pathways and ultimately, improve the way care is delivered.

In an effort to bridge the gap between meeting increasing patient demand and resource capabilities, healthcare leaders came together to develop The NHS Long Term Plan (LTP). The LTP launched a commitment to design services centred around user needs, to make the NHS future-proof, and to increase value for patients.

With the goal to accelerate the transformation of patient care, LTP aims to do things differently by giving patients more control over their own health and by encouraging better connections and collaboration between patients, healthcare professionals and medical teams. The LTP highlights the strong patient 'pull' for new ways to easily access, share and use health information. These digital tools have the capability to free up staff time and connect patients with healthcare professionals, extending access to healthcare overall.

The LTP's goal is that patients should be able to access virtual services alongside face-to-face services via a computer or smart phone. Additionally, Professor Stephen Powis, NHS England Medical Director, Royal College of Physicians, has said that as part of the LTP, the NHS must look at ways to cut unnecessary

appointments, save time and money on travel, reduce traffic and generally make the NHS more efficient.

The LTP's vision for 'a digital NHS' is now an even higher national policy priority since the outbreak of COVID-19; every healthcare provider across acute, community, primary and mental health settings, is being charged to digitalise by 2024. Connectivity, collaboration and efficiency are at its heart.

## Video Conferencing for Healthcare

With the urgency of the directives, paired with the need for quick decision-making driven by the pandemic, healthcare organisations and hospitals have an opportunity to accelerate their telemedicine and telehealth goals in a variety of ways. Two of the most impactful avenues for these organisations to implement video conferencing are through virtual patient visits and remote collaboration.

### PATIENT VISITS

Video consultations are a quick and valuable substitute for face-to-face consultations for different types of hospital outpatient appointments. While GPs and healthcare providers can use audio-only phone calls, video provides the closest approximate to an in-person meeting. It ensures patient comfort, and is a good mechanism for making assessments in the time allotted to the consultation.

Additionally, video conferencing tools provide options to make it simple and easy for both patients and providers by allowing for the use of multiple devices such as mobile phones or computers. Doctors can join meetings on their computers or using conferencing hardware systems in their clinics or hospitals. Patients can join using the device they are most comfortable



with. Some video conferencing technology even allows patients to join without downloading any software in their devices by utilising browser-based solutions.

When hospitals and providers are implementing a new solution, they need to keep simplicity and usability top of mind. Complicated technology will hinder the potential interest and adoption of this new way of receiving and providing care. Even though telehealth as a concept has existed for a long time, technical complexity has stood in the way of wide-scale adoption among patients and providers. IT managers evaluating and implementing video conferencing tools for virtual consultations will need to keep the patient experience in mind. Ultimately, workflows that closely follow the traditional in-person experience of a consultation will see the most success in acceptance.

Modern video conferencing solutions can ensure a smooth experience by performing well even during bad network conditions. Providers can implement virtual 'waiting rooms' and private meeting IDs to ensure privacy. Another key consideration should be

accessibility– features such as closed captioning, color contrast on the application and screen reader options help to ensure video consultations can be extended to all those who need them.

#### **MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM MEETINGS**

Video technology also enables collaboration between clinicians and doctors. Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT) play a vital role in ensuring high-quality patient treatment. MDTs also make it easier to share skills, knowledge and expertise across individual professions with distinctly different competencies. With the current focus on modernising healthcare, NHS Trusts must ensure MDTs have access to secure video conferencing facilities across their networks.

MDT meetings characteristically involve people in several locations, including specialists joining remotely. Typically, specialists would need to travel to a particular site to meet with peers. Implementing video meetings for MDTs enables each specialist to participate effectively from wherever they are, offering greater flexibility and access. Video conferencing

technologies also provide the platform to collaborate effectively with colleagues using options such as screen sharing, chat, meeting notetaking and recording options. Video collaboration reduces the time and cost of travel, ensures safety for everyone and encourages more participation.

As the common goal of healthcare is to meet patient needs, the level of collaboration that video conferencing provides means that each patient receives the right support, the right input at the right time, by the right team. The flow of communication and information can be optimised with video conferencing. This allows health and care professionals to work together with patients and carers in efficient and modern ways.

### Security and Privacy

Any technology being used to provide such an essential service must prioritise the patients' privacy, making them feel comfortable with sharing their personal information. Any video conferencing technology for consideration should have enhanced privacy measures in place, such as meeting passwords, locked meetings, and enterprise-grade encryption, to provide peace of mind for patients and their providers.

Providers who offer video conferencing options need to ensure that their platform is protected with industry standard encryption. Once a system is in place, the providers need to educate the doctors and nurses and give them training on how to use the system and how, when and why to send out credentials. Patients also need to be educated about security risks, best practices on how to have virtual visits from their home, and how to safeguard their own health data when they are connected to their WIFI networks at home.

As digital health matures and video conferencing for

### KEY BENEFITS OF VIDEO CONFERENCING FOR HEALTHCARE

- Reducing cross-contamination between patient and clinician
- Allows for GP video consultations and virtual outpatient clinics whilst adhering to social distancing measures or communicating with patients who are in quarantine
- Connecting COVID-19 patients who are in hospitals with their loved ones
- Reducing the time and risk for patients recovering from surgery by reducing the need to visit hospitals for follow-up consultations
- Saving time and money by reducing unproductive time spent for travelling to and from meetings
- Enabling quick, efficient, ad-hoc meetings for critical decision making between providers and clinicians who are geographically spread out

providing patient care becomes the norm, everyone who uses this method is responsible for ensuring that streaming and video data remains secure. Telehealth, telemedicine and virtual healthcare is relatively simple to implement, but maintaining and keeping the process secure can be challenging without the right platform.

### BlueJeans by Verizon

BlueJeans by Verizon, specialists in video conferencing technologies, is transforming collaboration and

connectivity within healthcare. Bringing video, audio and web conferencing together with the collaboration tools people use every day, BlueJeans support healthcare staff to benefit from new ways of connecting with patients and co-workers. BlueJeans focuses on three critical areas to enable providers, GPs, hospitals and NHS Trusts to accelerate their virtual healthcare projects.

- **Privacy and Security** – The BlueJeans video conferencing platform provides enterprise grade security that protects patients’ privacy and make them feel comfortable with secure meetings. Enhanced privacy measures such as meeting passwords, locked meetings, and enterprise-grade encryption provides peace of mind for patients and providers.
- **Scalability and Interoperability** – BlueJeans’ cloud-based video conferencing platform can be extended across an organisation’s entire environment – in desktops and personal devices, and in-room hardware systems so that hospitals and practices can take advantage of existing conferencing investments.
- **Management and Monitoring** – Deploying BlueJeans to all doctors, nurses, and medical staff is easy, which ensures rapid availability of telehealth options during critical times. BlueJeans comes with the analytics and monitoring tools to understand usage and quickly troubleshoot any issues to ensure there are no disruptions to consultations, saving valuable time and resources.

BlueJeans possesses a wealth of experience working in partnership with healthcare software developers, creating solutions that deliver immediate benefits. Partnering with healthcare software innovators, BlueJeans is able to offer the sector more scope to transform ways of working to address current connectivity challenges. BlueJeans also has an extensive team of specialists to help organisations with deployment, training and adoption of telehealth initiatives.

### **Telehealth**

Telehealth, telemedicine and virtual patient care have the ability to expand patient engagement by improving experiences, increasing access to healthcare for patients and providing safety and comfort in doing so. For providers, enabling virtual communication can lead to more efficient practices, better collaboration and increased knowledge-sharing. Providing the right video conferencing option can protect both the patients and providers and reduce some of the burden of the front-line staff who are working tirelessly every day to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. With the pandemic as a catalyst, hospitals and providers can take this opportunity to accelerate their virtual healthcare initiatives and transform their practices to meet current and future needs that will revolutionise patient outcomes.

## About BlueJeans

BlueJeans is the meetings platform for the modern workplace and the first cloud service to connect desktops, mobile devices and room systems in one video meeting. Our mission is to make online meetings fast to join and simple to use. Thousands of companies and government agencies use BlueJeans every day for conducting video, audio and web conferencing meetings and hosting large interactive events, so people can work productively where and how they want.

If you want to talk about the future of your communication technology, please get in touch. Come visit our website to learn more about our award- winning platform. Or better yet, let's meet over a video call using BlueJeans.

For more information, visit [www.bluejeans.com](http://www.bluejeans.com)

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