COVID-19 $900B RELIEF BILL PROVIDES GRANT EXPANSION

Enabling Vaccines, Testing, and Virtual Rounding

2021

COVID-19 is breaking records: people infected, ICU beds occupied, and unfortunately, deaths. We are still struggling to get the correct PPE available to mitigate the spread of the virus. The frontline workers and the population in general are exhausted with the challenges and stress of it all. We face the daunting task of ramping up the availability and deployment of vaccines, improving the timeliness and availability of testing and supporting our healthcare systems and providers as they try to keep their communities safe and well. Experts are predicting that we have not seen the full impact of the current surge in cases, and that we are likely to see increasing cases in the next couple of months. Healthcare systems have patients, practitioners, staff, and employees who are impacted both at work and at home. All of us will be impacted in one way or another by the presence of COVID-19 in our communities.

Challenge

Given all that is going on, it is important to find ways to leverage our resources in a safe, effective, efficient way while supporting new healthcare delivery methods to meet the increased demand for services. How do we support the roll out of vaccines, testing, and new care delivery systems? How do we address the specific needs of our hospitals, FQHC's, schools, long term care facilities, and prisons? What do we need to put in place to support our efforts from an IT or telehealth perspective? With healthcare organizations re-configuring on the fly, how can we support their efforts with mobile, flexible solutions? And of course, how will we pay for the new systems and workflows?

Solutions

Healthcare delivery during the 2020 COVID-19 assault rapidly changed to accommodate the increased demand for safe patient services. Patient portals provided increased access to care. Patients and providers connected over video for telehealth visits. Hospitals deployed lightweight tablet-based carts for **Virtual Rounding** and **Virtual Visits**. From patient registration, to screening and testing to triage and delivery of care, video platforms quickly evolved to address healthcare demand.

Now as we move into full deployment of vaccines, and continue to ramp up testing, we need to increase our arsenal of safe, mobile healthcare access points. We need robust video and network architectures that enable virtual solutions. In 2021, we will see the expansion of virtual systems to aid in:

- Patient Registration
- COVID Testing
- Rounding
- Family Visits
- E-Sitting
- ICU and NICU Provider Support

- Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)
- Primary Care and Behavioral health
- Screening
- Triage
- Mobile Radiology (Ultrasound)
- Vital Signs Collection

Vaccination and testing will require systems to:

- Educate communities
- Provide more accessible safe ways to register patients
- Leverage systems to triage, and guide the patients presenting for vaccination through the process
- Utilize e-sitter to help in the observation period following a vaccination
- Provide telehealth services to help support patients before, during and after vaccination
- Provide telehealth services to help support the non COVID patients

For a look at how virtual services can be of assistance to combat COVID-19 please see the story of the amazing work done by Isaiah Nathaniel and his colleagues at DVCH **https://tryten.com/dvch-spotlight.**

IT Impact

In 2021, it will be important to solidify and expand IT infrastructure and Network architectures to accommodate the increase in virtual access. IT departments will be looking for ways to make tablet use more hands free, safe, and useful for telehealth. They will be looking for easy ways to take advantage of their existing video rooms. Mobile carts that can serve as 'rooms' on-the-go will assist in rounding or bringing in experts to the patient as needed. IT will be able to offer their users more virtual options which are easier to support and that will fit into their existing architectures. This will enable them to support the new processes that evolve around vaccination, testing and alternate care delivery models. Financial support through grants like the $900B COVID relief bill passed in DEC 2020 or the proposed 2021 relief package will support more robust IT and Network infrastructure needed to stop COVID-19.

Grants

$900B COVID relief bill (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021)

DEC 2020 the US Congress passed a 900B COVID relief bill (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021). The bill will:

- Impact how we fight the virus.
- Enable investments in virtual systems to assist healthcare delivery.
- and help many of the people facing financial hardships due to COVID.

A copy of the bill can be found **here**. The bill is over 5000 pages and includes $249,950,000 for an expansion of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program outlined in the Cares Act. It also provides support for increased access to broadband and improving IT infrastructure.

Below are a few of the use cases/technologies that were awarded in the original Cares Act (**COVID-19 Telehealth Program**). Consider how they might help virtualize your COVID response efforts in 2021.

- Telemedicine Carts
- Telehealth Rounding
- Virtual Visits
- Tablets
- Network Upgrade

- Telehealth Platform
- Family Virtual Visits
- Virtual Visit software
- Telehealth Screening
- Emergency Telehealth Response

Benefit

Telehealth, Telemedicine, and Virtual care delivery platforms can make a huge difference in patient outcomes, practitioner safety and community health and wellness. Pulling together we can make a difference in the fight against COVID-19 and move toward a happier healthier time. Be Well!

Dr. Deborah A. Jeffries
Global Director of Healthcare at Tryten

Dr. Deb began her career in physics, engineering, IT, and medicine. She has taught college level pathophysiology, hematology, and pathology. For 18 years, she has focused on telemedicine and distance learning to help healthcare systems and educational institutes as they work to enable patient health and wellness.