

WHITEPAPER

Zero Contact, Zero Wait Times, Zero Delays

3 Reasons Why Now is the Time to Turn
to a Remote Patient Intake Solution



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When we discovered our first Coronavirus case in the United States in late February of 2020, a host of concerns from health systems followed. Providing high-quality care, keeping up to date on emerging information and, of course, reducing patient and staff exposure to the virus were of growing concern.

The healthcare industry, historically slow to “turn the ship” and adopt new technologies, quickly pivoted to find solutions that kept patients physically out of healthcare buildings. Virtual collaboration, data tracking, and of course telehealth has stepped up to help address the virus and flatten the curve.

Federal health officials, who had long placed technological and privacy restrictions on the delivery of telehealth services, moved to empower providers to serve their patients wherever they might be. **And patients, nearly half of whom who just a year ago, reported being skeptical of the benefits of health IT, began using Telehealth for 30% of ambulatory visits.**

Telehealth has certainly helped reduce the spread of COVID-19, keeping many patients at home and out of crowded waiting rooms, but this is only the first step.

What about those patients that need to come through the doors of the office for care, either related to COVID-19 or for other reasons?

While the way we deliver care may have permanently been altered, there are some processes in healthcare we know are unlikely to change. Despite this “new normal”, the patient intake process will still need to continue. Just as care delivery has been made remote, the intake process will also need to be available remotely as well.

Whether an appointment takes place within the four walls of a doctor's office or from behind a screen - patients still need to provide demographic and financial information so that claims can be processed, and healthcare providers can be paid. They need to show their insurance card and ID to ensure accurate data capture. They will need to give consent to certain activities, and informed consent to others. They will need to provide health histories, signs and symptoms, and lists of medications and allergies so that care can effectively be delivered.

Remote Patient Intake allows for a contactless environment that still enables you to perform all the necessary tasks associated with the intake process - while eliminating potential situations for the spread of infection.

Many healthcare systems are looking to eliminate waiting room traffic, and many have even implemented a parking lot waiting room – as officials say this is the best way to limit contact and the spread of the coronavirus. With a remote registration process, patients complete their registration from their home, their car, or another personal space.

Staff can manage the intake process from a remote location without needing to handle patients' paperwork, ID cards, insurance cards, credit cards, etc.

As healthcare organizations are intensifying their focus on strategic planning for a digital future and are preparing themselves to be ready to launch new initiatives now, as well as in a post-COVID-19 world – Remote Patient Intake will continue to be a high priority initiative for health systems looking to streamline the intake process, eliminate waiting room traffic, and provide patients with the confidence needed to resume healthcare appointments.

Below are three reasons Remote Patient Intake plays an important role in healthcare.

#1: ZERO CONTACT

Promote Staff & Patient Safety

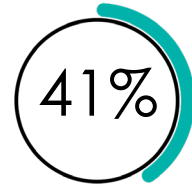
Paper processes have long been linked to a laundry list of healthcare process issues, such as lost documents, outdated information, environmental waste, increased costs, and of course slow, inefficient process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the potential for manual, paper processes to spread infection has made its way to the top of the paper problem list.

As a number of studies of flu, rhinovirus, coronavirus and other microbes have shown, respiratory illnesses (including the new coronavirus) can spread by touching contaminated surfaces, particularly in places like offices and hospitals.

The safety of patients and staff has always been a top priority in healthcare, but ensuring safety is perhaps more challenging than ever. Experts say to combat COVID-19, it's important to continually disinfect common surfaces. While conditions of which the virus is likely to spread is still being tested, some studies have shown that some strains of the virus can potentially live up to hours and/or days on surfaces such as glass, plastic, steel, and paper.

A 2019 survey of General Practitioner's offices found that the pen in the patient registration area was the dirtiest surface in the office: dirtier than the door handle, waiting room armrests or the doctor's keyboard.¹

And yet, in April 2020, 41% of health systems surveyed by Interlace Health responded that they were still using a clipboard and pen in their registration areas.²



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Remote Patient Intake allows a patient to complete all their pre-visit steps on their own device, from wherever they like, including the comfort of their own home. This eliminates the need for registration staff and patients to pass things like clipboards, pens, insurance cards, and drivers licenses back and forth. Patients can fill out all their forms, take photos of their cards, and make payments from their own device.

“We strongly believe that a patient waiting at home, is better than one exposed in the community while visiting the traditional health care system.”

-Chris Stenrud, vice president of communications at Teledoc

With 69% of US healthcare workers worried they will put themselves at risk of exposure³, taking the waiting room virtual, can eliminate unnecessary contact with patients, while still allowing for necessary exchange of information at registration to occur. Without the need for direct contact with a patient, the information collected from the patient is transmitted electronically to the EHR. Healthcare staff can then view an intuitive dashboard to access intake information, as well as discrete data and traditional form image integrations with the EHR.

Teledoc vice president for communications [Chris Stenrud](#), said: “We strongly believe that a patient waiting at home, is better than one exposed in the community while visiting the traditional health care system.”⁴

The bottom line is that the best way to protect ourselves from coronavirus — whether it's surface transmission or close human contact — is of course, staying home when possible - social distancing, washing our hands, not touching our faces, and wearing masks.

Remote Patient Intake is the safest possible way to handle the registration process and presents an opportunity to reduce the risk of spreading infections.

#2: ZERO WAIT TIMES

Enhance Patient Experience & Boost Patient Through-Put

Patients have long been irritated by extended wait times. In a 2019 survey, 30% of patients said they had walked out of an appointment due to long waits.⁵ Due to the coronavirus pandemic, patients will be even less willing to spend time in a waiting room.

Both patients and providers are interested in reducing the time patients spend in the waiting area before being seen. **By allowing a patient to complete all the intake steps before coming for their visits, wait times can be cut drastically or even eliminated. There is no need for them to arrive 15 to 30 minutes ahead of their visit to complete paperwork.**

In today's environment, not only are wait times a bit of an annoyance, or inconvenience for patients – but they can also lead to patient anxiety due the risk of cross-infection among patients in waiting room environments.

As hospitals try to rebound from the financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, patients need to be reminded that these facilities are still safe places to get health-care when they need it. In fact, hospitals in California and Washington state have

launched campaigns to encourage people not to delay healthcare when they need it during the pandemic.⁶

Communicating with your patients remotely and eliminating waiting room interactions, helps to instill a sense of confidence in your patient population that all possible safety measures are instilled.

The opportunity to complete pre-registration forms and even consent forms in advance, helps ensure patients are not only more confident, prepared, and at ease, but that staff can create a smoother and quicker registration process. This ultimately leads to reduced wait times, decreased patient anxiety, and increased patient satisfaction.

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With a Pre-Registration process, the number of registrations possible per day per registrar go from 24 to 40.⁷ Allowing registration staff to focus more on patient-centric activities and contributing to the health system's bottom line.

Now, more than ever, decreasing and even eliminating wait times with a "contactless" process creates a win for patients, staff, and providers.

#3: ZERO DELAYS

Enable remote visits for all patients, while avoiding delays in payment

A recent survey conducted by Interlace Health discovered:

- ◆ **84%** of health systems responded that they have added Telehealth technology to help address the COVID-19 outbreak.
- ◆ **57%** said they feel the health system will continue to encourage Telehealth after the outbreak has passed.
- ◆ **67%** think that patients will prefer to use it in the future over attending visits in-person.⁸

Seema Verma, CMS administrator, commented on the rise of telehealth during the pandemic, “The genie’s out of the bottle on this one. It’s taken the crisis to push us to a new frontier, but there’s absolutely no going back.”⁹

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-Seema Verma, administrator at CMS

But, with telehealth taking centerstage, registration challenges have become more prevalent at some health systems.

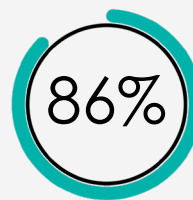
The patient still needs a way to register for the visit. Many healthcare organizations offer patient portals, but adoption has often been low, and portal access usually requires an in-person visit to the provider. New patients and patients who had not previously established portal access who

would now like a telehealth visit may be left out of the Telehealth process.

A Remote Patient Intake solution can work alongside your portal to address patients who can’t register via your patient portal. It can also serve the same forms the patient would have received during an in-person visit, in a mobile-friendly format.

With Remote Patient Intake, you can capture important intake information ahead of each telehealth visit or in-person visit. Seamless integration with EHR systems, patient portals, CRM systems, and other archiving systems allows for instant archival to prevent delays, eliminates manual errors, and contributes to a more complete health record.

For many health systems, the rise in telehealth is also directly related to delays in payment. With a Remote Patient Intake solution, staff can manage the intake process from a remote location without needing to handle patients’ paperwork, ID cards, insurance cards or credit cards.



of patients prefer to pay their bills online.

Patients will always know what their co-pays or outstanding balances are before an appointment. With 86% of patients prefer to pay their bills online, this helps to ensure payments are requested upon registration each time, eliminating the need for staff to make the request.¹⁰

This contributes to accelerated revenue and reduces staff’s time spent collecting patient payments.

CONCLUSION:

In what many have deemed healthcare's "Amazon Moment", the COVID-19 pandemic has led most organizations to pivot quickly. They have relied on technology to move the predominance of care from the hospital to the home, meet CDC and government standards, patient expectations, and resource and space constrictions.

These circumstances have shifted having a zero-contact patient intake process from a 'nice-to-have' to a necessity. As the healthcare industry has shifted to meet Social Distancing standards and other recommendations, reducing wait times through remote registration can help support keeping communities safe.

The Coronavirus pandemic may be a tipping point if we look across time horizons for the future of healthcare, and even for how we live and work. One thing we know for sure is that healthcare providers will need to adapt, and the waiting room experience will need to be reimagined.

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Remote Patient Intake is ideally suited to meet the registration demands of inpatient and virtual care. At the same time, it reduces the risk of virus transmission, streamlines registration processes, improves the registration experience for staff and patients; and, most importantly, ensures the safety of healthcare workers and staff.





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HEALTH

Making healthcare *better*
one process at a time.

About Interlace Health

Interlace Health (formerly FormFast) lives at the intersection of the relationships, environments, and experiences at the heart of modern health care. By enabling seamless data capture and information exchange among providers, staff, and patients, Interlace Health solves many of health care's central challenges through process transformation. The result for its clients is reduced costs, increased collections, uplifted patient experiences, improved operational efficiency, and enhanced support of an organization's integration strategy.

Interlace Health's platform enables several solutions that are accessible by clinicians and patients inside and outside the walls of the health care system. These include patient intake, revenue cycle management, electronic consent, forms-on-demand and downtime contingency. To learn more about how the company is improving health care workflow, visit www.interlacehealth.com.

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