

WHITE PAPER

Moving beyond telehealth: how unified communications can transform healthcare collaboration for patients and providers



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Healthcare providers have long been hampered by inefficient communication systems, negatively impacting productivity every day. The time sink created by underperforming, outdated and disconnected communication systems can have a deep and adverse impact on productivity and patient outcomes.

There are additional consequences of poor communications, according to the [HIPAA Journal](#). “Patients often experience long delays, often at several stages of their journey in a hospital. Many of the delays are the result of poor communication between staff. These communication issues slow patient throughput, increase hospital stays, and are a key factor in poor patient satisfaction scores and are costly for hospitals.”

Scalable bandwidth and better communications capabilities can help to relieve this problem.

Healthcare organizations need to communicate more efficiently, share files securely and ultimately improve the delivery of care. In response to these and other concerns, the adoption of unified communications as a service (UCaaS) is growing across all market segments. “Leveraging technology that’s intuitive and easy to use can ease the burden on clinicians and help improve their productivity and ability to provide better patient care,” [said Andrew Craver](#), Vice President of Segment Marketing for Spectrum Enterprise.

Gartner [forecasts](#) that from 2022 through 2026, the extent to which organizations deploy cloud telephony will increase, from about 35% of overall telephony users to 55%.

“With UCaaS solutions, like cloud-based telephony, messaging and videoconferencing, caregivers can access essential data in real time,” [according to Mordor Research](#). “UCaaS, coupled with organizational mobility, provides numerous advantages, like real-time communications to locate and connect the caregivers instantly, effective call routing and faster connections regardless of location, and also enables the healthcare organization to establish rules and reduce interruptions and distractions from ER rooms to surgeries.”

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ANDREW CRAVER
Vice President of Segment
Marketing
Spectrum Enterprise

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Improving provider collaboration and patient care with unified communications (UC)

Providers and patients today expect access to seamless digital healthcare — whether via video, voice or in-person. To meet that expectation, the ability to rapidly and safely share protected health information (PHI) and other important data is essential. A resilient data and communications infrastructure is more important than ever.

Collaboration platforms like UC combine technologies that enable virtual engagement and connect healthcare teams wherever they are.

For high-quality care experiences and to meet the [Quadruple Aim](#) — improving patient and clinician experiences, lowering costs and improving care outcomes — healthcare organizations require reliable connectivity and communication tools that can scale and adapt to this new environment.

“This is particularly crucial in the healthcare space, where people often aren’t working behind a dedicated desk,” writes [Rebekah Carter in UC Today](#). “Medical professionals spend a lot of time on their feet, distributed across a range of environments, from labs and clinics to diagnostic centers. In the age of remote work, some specialists and institutions are even collaborating with healthcare groups from different locations around the globe. Unified communications ensure all of these individuals can interact seamlessly as though they were in the same office, with access to video conferencing, messaging and calls.”

Additional drivers for unified communications in healthcare include:

- The growing popularity of **telemedicine**, which allows patients and providers to interact through video conferencing and audio interactions to access care. The adoption of telemedicine continues to increase, as researchers found that [76% of patients](#) who have had a telehealth visit would prefer to continue using the technology in the future.
- The rapid adoption of **artificial intelligence technology** is directly transforming patient treatment, improving physician access to vital information and augmenting the overall management of practices. Nearly [one-third of healthcare costs](#) are associated with administrative tasks. By using AI to automate many of these tasks, leading practices and health systems are helping improve their bottom lines and reduce overall healthcare costs.
- The need for integration with hundreds of connected **applications and tools** — ranging from wearable monitoring devices to patient portals and mobile health experiences. About [30% of U.S. adults](#) use wearable healthcare devices, and 82% are willing to share the health data from wearables with their care providers in an effort to improve their overall health. Similarly, [80% of smartphone users](#) say they are interested in receiving healthcare alerts.

Unified communications as a competitive differentiator

Another important benefit is the potential for unified communications to serve as a competitive advantage, especially for smaller healthcare providers. Patients have a wealth of choices when it comes to which provider they want to use.

Just like in other areas of their lives, patients are looking to healthcare organizations to use digital technology to improve access, increase convenience and speed, lower costs and improve care while providing a better experience overall.

According to [recent](#) research, physician practices and healthcare organizations are aware of the need to implement more technology to improve the patient experience. Innovating to enhance the patient experience was considered a critical or high priority by 64% of respondents. On a related note, 76% of technology leaders were pleased with their managed network services – such as SD-WAN, WiFi, managed security and network edge solutions. These are the type of technologies providing the backbone for healthcare’s digital transformation.

They also recognized the importance of digital technology in attracting patients to their practice or health organization, as 58% indicated that innovating to gain market share/attract patients was a critical or high priority.

Spectrum Enterprise Unified Communications for healthcare

With fully managed, cloud-based unified communications, healthcare organizations can seamlessly bring together calling, messaging, video conferencing and more in a single, comprehensive application. [Spectrum Enterprise Unified Communications \(UC\) with RingCentral](#) makes it easy to leverage collaboration and communication tools to improve business processes and enhance the patient experience. It easily integrates with Electronic Health Records (EHR) by capturing care team messaging or video session transcripts and adding them to a patient record via developed integration workflows. This level of seamless connectivity allows healthcare organizations to bring staff and patients together with team messaging, video conferencing and phone calls — on any device, from anywhere.



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Spectrum Enterprise can offer [healthcare providers](#) a [fully managed UCaaS platform](#) that includes telephony, collaboration, conferencing, admin portals, hardware and consistent innovation with frequent feature releases. Combining our fiber network with a broad set of capabilities, including WAN, managed services and our expanded unified communications and collaboration services, we stand apart from technology providers by partnering with healthcare organizations to tailor solutions to meet the unique needs of every practice.

Benefits of unified communication for healthcare organizations and practices

- **An intuitive, cloud-based phone system:** Implement a customizable and easy-to-use, cloud-based phone system and quickly start taking video and phone calls on any device.
- **Seamless experiences across the desktop, tablet and smartphone:** Mobile device integration includes seamless call shifting between the desktop or desk phone to a mobile device even while users are mid-call.
- **Real-time collaboration on the go:** Provide a flexible and mobile collaboration experience both inside and outside of the practice facility.
- **Simplified chat and messaging:** In addition to text/short message service (SMS), multimedia messaging service (MMS) and internet-fax capabilities, gain further efficiencies through collaboration tools for physicians, clinicians and patients. Add contacts to your team's messaging groups, share calendars, assign tasks and share real-time patient health information.
- **200+ powerful app integrations:** Drive productivity with popular applications or build your own with open application programming interfaces (APIs).
- **Less hardware to manage:** Free up IT resources and budget while limiting the need to maintain telecommunications equipment across your organization.
- **Interact with ease:** Conduct telehealth visits with screen sharing, web sharing and file annotation. Give physicians and patients access to electronic health records, test results, diagnoses and more for an ideal patient experience with no download required.
- **Full visibility into your network:** View your voice network topology, user management, trouble tickets, usage analytics and performance through an intuitive, cloud-based Managed Network Edge or Enterprise Network Edge portal for faster, better decision-making regardless of the number of locations, environments or size of footprint.

Managed Services for healthcare

With voice, video and network traffic growing every day, and teams needing to connect any time, anywhere from any device, the importance of unified communications is clear.

But keeping up with evolving security requirements, upcoming trends and new technologies isn't easy for healthcare IT departments. Besides needing to ensure the network is always working while also controlling costs, IT leaders are expected to know how cybersecurity, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and more are affecting their patient experiences and operations.

However, there is a way to simplify and enhance the management of IT services with Spectrum Enterprise. Healthcare organizations have the ability to unite calling, messaging and video conferencing with managed, cloud-based UC from Spectrum Enterprise.

Spectrum Enterprise [managed services](#) include network design, equipment, installation and 24/7/365 monitoring and U.S.-based support. Our easy-to-use service portal provides insight into your network activities and prepares you to make better informed decisions about future IT investments.

Benefits of managed services for healthcare include:

- **Predictable costs** help with budget planning and can also lead to overall savings. Spectrum Enterprise IT experts maintain systems and software, including network security, reducing the risk of unexpected issues and costs.
- **Modernization of legacy systems** is a perpetual task, especially as the pace of technological advancements accelerate. Up-to-date network equipment with managed services helps ensure your systems and processes are prepared for what's next in healthcare IT.
- Managed services act as **an extension of your internal team**, helping to free your staff to focus on strategic priorities like implementing innovative technology to improve patient experience and outcomes.
- Proactive **network and security management** experts deploy the latest updates to keep your IT infrastructure operating at peak performance, and recommend solutions as needs change and reduce risk by monitoring your network 24/7/365.



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In Conclusion

Healthcare's digital transformation has long been characterized as an ongoing process driven by technological advancements, regulatory changes and shifting patient expectations. Issues around data privacy and security, IT infrastructure and interoperability, and provider and patient readiness will remain priorities in coming years.

Closing technology gaps around patient and provider communications is critical to improving the patient experience whether these unified communications platforms are used to call, text, message, locate clinicians or share documents in real time, according to Andrew Craver, Vice President of Segment Marketing for Spectrum Enterprise.

“By partnering with trusted solutions providers to manage connectivity, infrastructure and cybersecurity issues, healthcare organizations can devote more resources to other key areas, including adding more qualified talent to support their digital transformation,” [said Craver](#). “Leveraging technology that’s intuitive and easy to use can ease the burden on clinicians and help improve their productivity and ability to provide better patient care.”

Learn more about how Spectrum Enterprise can design a solution to deliver a broad set of capabilities and a seamless collaboration experience for your practice.



Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes [networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions](#). The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.

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