

# TELE-URGENT CARE

## LINKING URGENT CARE PATIENTS TO ED USACS CLINICIANS THROUGH A HEALTH SYSTEM-BASED TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM

### THE CHALLENGE:

Patients often don't have access to timely, low-acuity medical care. Telemedicine can serve that role. Telemedicine has increasingly been an adjunct to traditional, in person care, and has expanded considerably since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, many patients have come to expect rapid access to healthcare through their phones or computers. This is especially true when it comes to acute, urgent care needs such as upper respiratory tract infections, minor urinary tract infections, and rashes.

Telemedicine programs have been launched nationally by telemedicine-only companies that partner with employer-based insurance plans. The problem is that these visits are conducted outside of a patients' regular healthcare delivery network. The result is that this care is disconnected. Sometimes, care is not delivered in line with patient treatment goals and may not be delivered by acute care specialists. Additionally, when patients require specialty care after their telemedicine visit, they may not be referred to the right health system-based specialist who is connected to their regular, longitudinal care.



### THE SOLUTION:

In June 2022, USACS launched a highly successful health system-based tele-urgent care program with Centura Health, a connected system with 20 hospitals and more than 200 clinics across Colorado and Kansas. Centura, which is headquartered locally in Colorado, contracted with local USACS emergency medicine physicians and APPs to staff their virtual urgent care center using Epic-based telehealth. This partnership allows for local providers who know the healthcare system to see patients and not only treat their acute conditions but also assist in navigation of the system. The Colorado based team knows the geography, local healthcare system, and where to refer patients for follow-up. If there is a question or a need for escalation to a traditional emergency department, they direct patients to the closest ED and notify the in-person physician, creating better continuity of care to facilitate ED evaluation. USACS is also working with other health systems to explore similar models for tele-urgent care.

### THE RESULT:

Since the launch of the tele-urgent care with Centura, patients have had an excellent experience using the service. Clinicians also enjoy augmenting their in-person practice by performing telehealth visits. Currently, volume is ramping up to 50-60 patients per day as of December 2022 and is expected to rise substantially. The tele-urgent care team focuses on treating cough/cold/flu symptoms, sinus infections, allergies, rashes and minor burns, conjunctivitis, urinary tract infections, nausea/vomiting/diarrhea, and minor sprains and strains. Importantly, the clinicians also have deep experience in emergency medicine and in the local healthcare system, allowing them to recognize patients who require immediate in-person care and know precisely what referrals are needed after the visit.