

Veterans Health Administration Telehealth Services

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Telehealth

VISN 12 Telehealth

DOD Defense Health Board Meeting

August 10th, 2022 – Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North Chicago, IL

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Connected Care

Disclaimers

- I have no relevant financial or non-financial relationships in the products or services communicated, compared, or evaluated in this presentation.
- The names of actual companies and products mentioned here may be the trademark(s) of their respective owners.
- The terms 'Telehealth' and 'Telemedicine' might be used interchangeably throughout this presentation

Agenda

1. A Brief History of Telehealth
2. Our Program and Approach
3. Our Scope and Data
4. Our Vision and Goals
5. Future Directions

1. A Brief History of Telehealth

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So, What is TeleHealth?

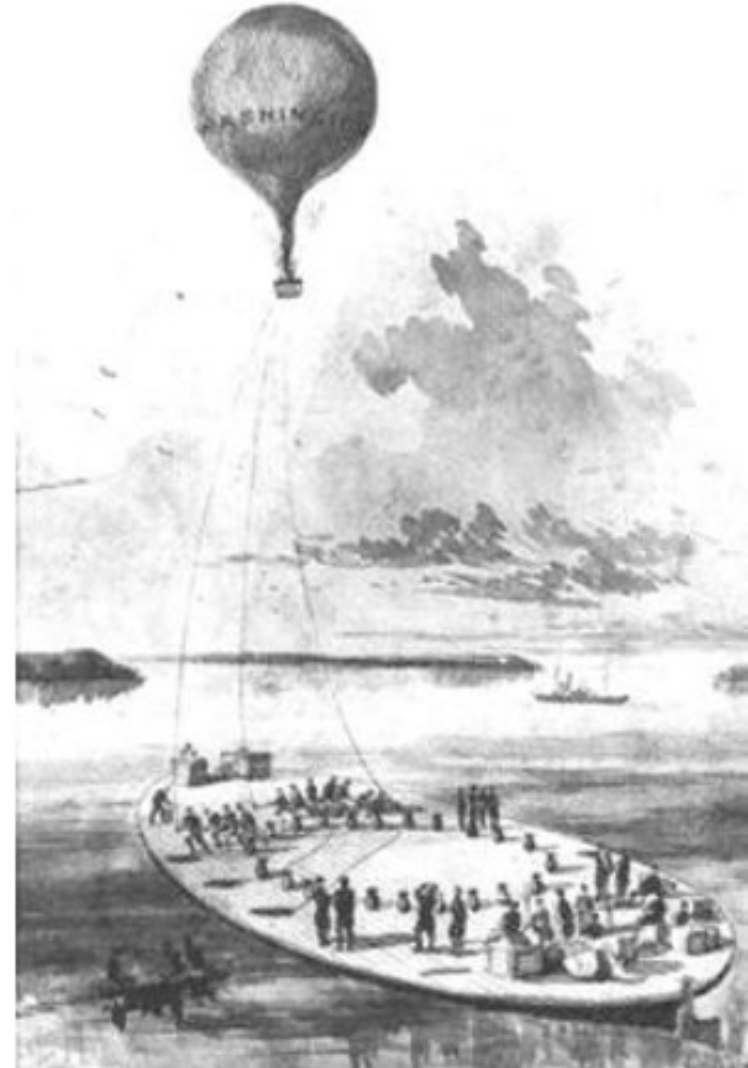
- TeleHealth is a transfer of medical information via telecommunication technologies for consulting, remote procedures or exams.
- TeleHealth is NOT a separate subspecialty.
 - Performing same procedures over distance and sometimes time, using technology.



Credit: blog.dingtone.me

History of TeleHealth

- Who was the first?
- That's a matter of opinion.
- Civil War Era – 1865
 - Telegraph wire between hot air balloons relayed information from the battle front to the surgeons in the rear.



History of TeleHealth

- 1906 – United States
 - First EEG information was transmitted via telegraph

- 1925 – Radio Doctor Predicted

Credit: Dr. Elizabeth Krupinski, University of Arizona



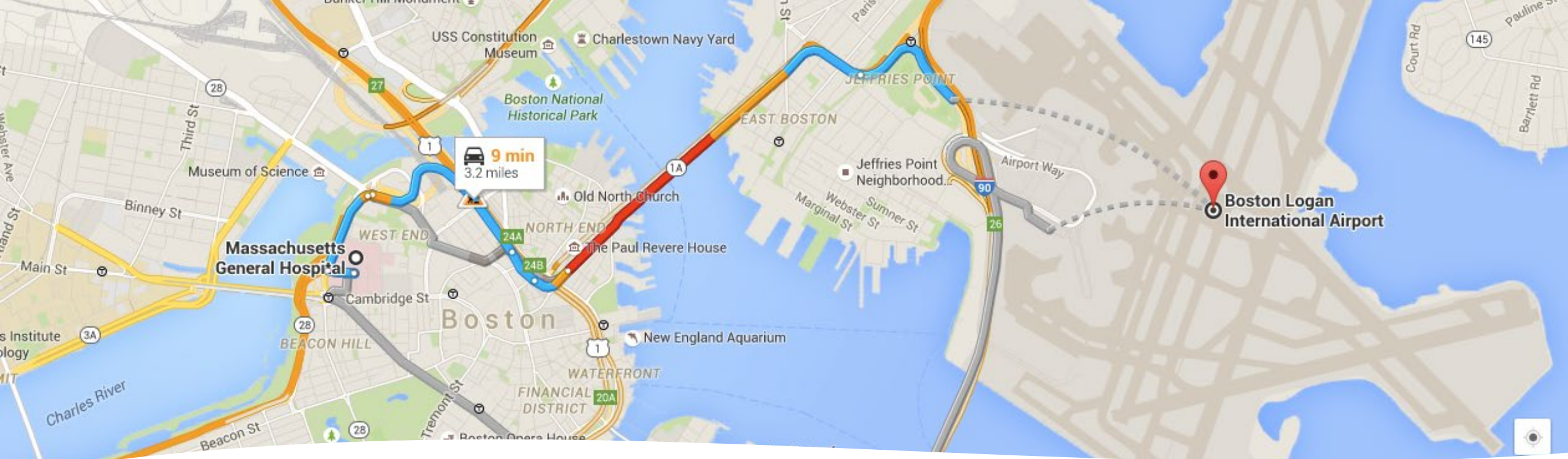
History of TeleHealth

1959 University of Nebraska Medical Center:

- Two-Way Television
- Mostly Psychiatry Group Therapy
 - Omaha VA
 - Lincoln VA
 - Grand Island VA Hospital



Image from Wittson, Cecil L.; Affleck, D. Craig; Johnson, Van Mental Hospitals, Vol 12(10), 1961, 22-23.

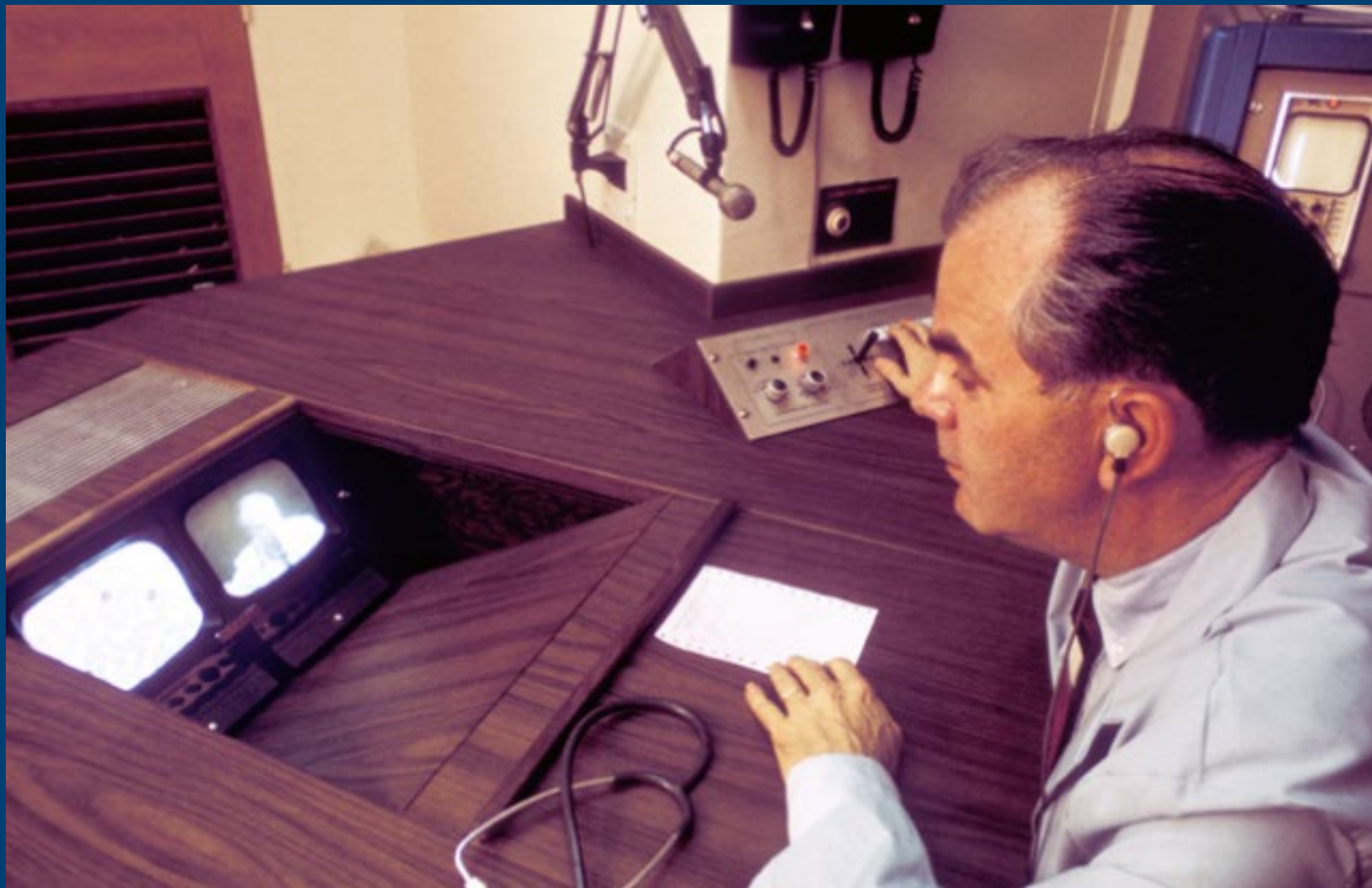


History of TeleHealth

- Dr. Kenneth Bird – Boston, MA 1963-1970
- Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) to Logan Airport



Credit: Dr. Elizabeth Krupinski, University of Arizona





Of Note:

MGH established a telepsychiatry link to Bedford, MA VA Hospital in 1968 which was operational until mid-1980's.

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History of TeleHealth

- Limitations of Dr. Bird's Program
 - Technology
 - Used Microwave/Satellite Transmissions
 - World Wide Web still in its infancy
 - Expensive
 - TV equipment was not cheap at that time

History of TeleHealth

- Why was Dr. Bird's Program Important?
 - Inspired Other Programs
 - NASA
 - Blueprint for how to provide healthcare to astronauts in space (Like Captain Lovell)
 - Showed that this type of healthcare modality was truly feasible
 - Not much was done with TeleHealth outside of NASA until the 1990s
 - Arizona was the first state to fund state-wide telehealth in 1992
 - VA officially implemented telehealth in 2003

So Why TeleHealth in the VA?



Our Veteran Population

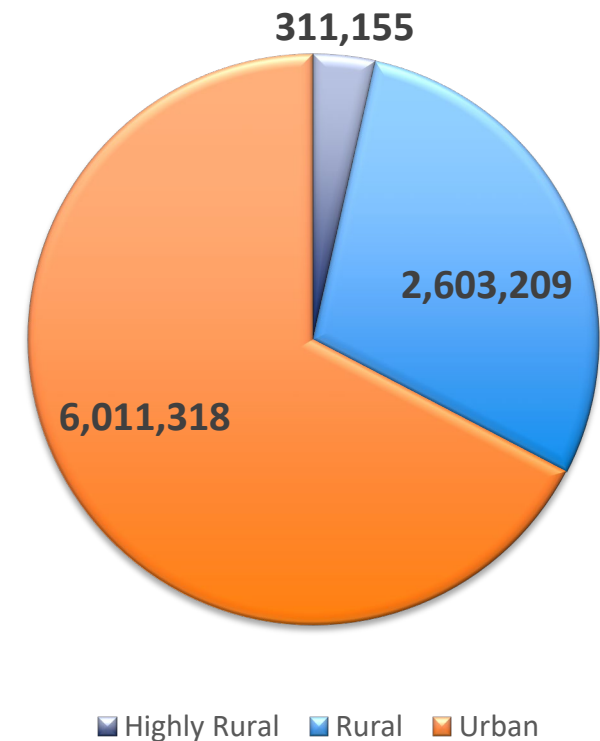
- Approximately 19 million Veterans in the United States FY21
- >9.2 million Veterans registered with VA FY21



Our Veteran Population At a Glance

- 32% of registered Veterans and 43% of ALL Veterans live in rural or highly rural areas (VSSC, FY22)
 - Limited Access to VA Care
 - Can live hours away from nearest facility
 - Outpatient clinics do not have all specialty care services
- Urban Veterans also need access to safe, high-quality health care.
 - Clinic wait times
 - Driving/Parking/Traffic
 - Time off from work, etc.

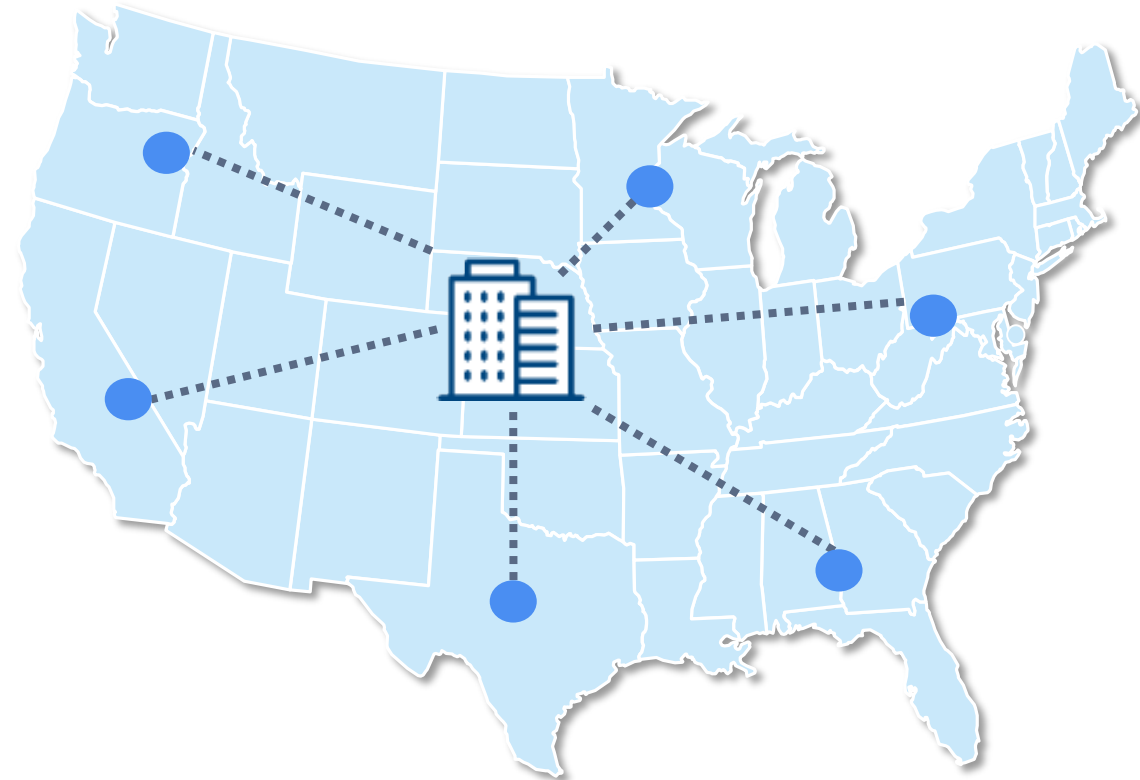
VA Veteran Population by Rurality
FY22-May 22 (VSSC 2022)



The Why

Trusted Care: Anytime, Anywhere

- VA will leverage telehealth technologies to enhance the **accessibility, capacity, quality,** and **experience** of VA care for Veterans, their families, and their caregivers anywhere in the country.
- VA will match and optimize clinical supply and demand across the country to address health care disparities.



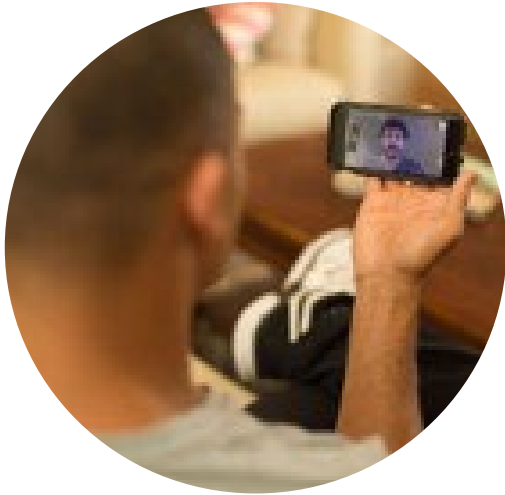
2. Our Program and Approach

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Telehealth Modalities



Clinical Video Telehealth



Store and Forward Telehealth



**Remote Patient Monitoring Home
Telehealth**

Clinical Video TeleHealth (CVT)

- Real-Time, Synchronous Video and Audio Transmission.
 - Leverages telepresenters and exam peripherals
 - Multidisciplinary team model
 - In-person and video
 - Example: TelePrimary Care



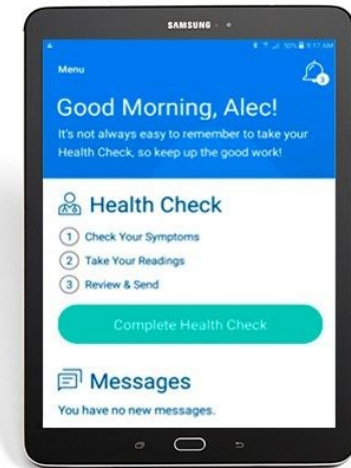
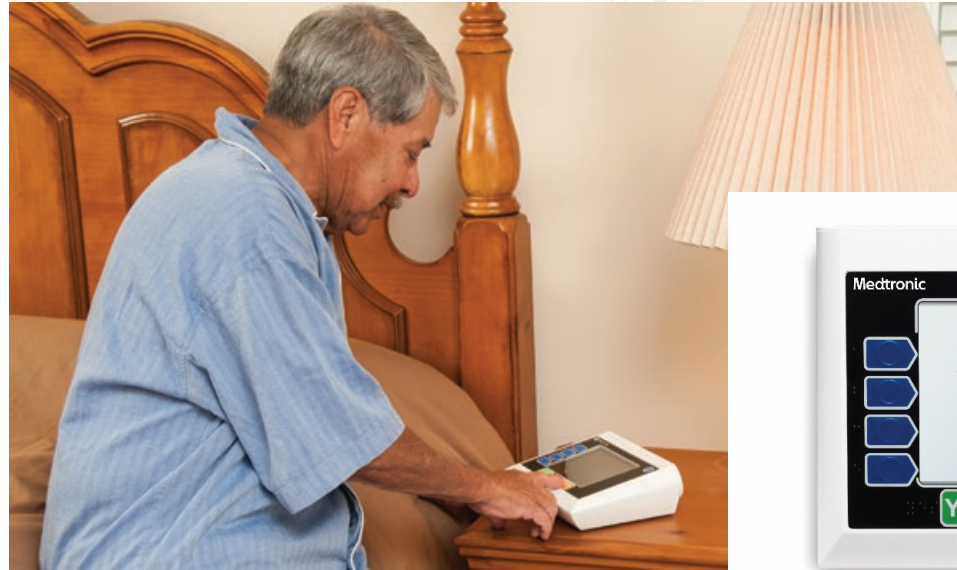
Store and Forward TeleHealth (SFT)



- Asynchronous Modality
- Storing clinical information (data, images, sound, video, etc.) and then forwarding to or retrieved by another clinical site for evaluation.
 - TeleDermatology
 - TeleRetinal Imaging (TRI)
 - TeleRadiology
 - TeleSleep Medicine
 - TeleWound Care

Remote Patient Monitoring - Home TeleHealth (RPM-HT)

- Using in-home devices and technologies to monitor symptoms/vitals.
- Monitored by Care Coordinators
- Use of approved Disease Management Protocols (DMPs)
 - Helps with chronic conditions
 - Encourages patient independence

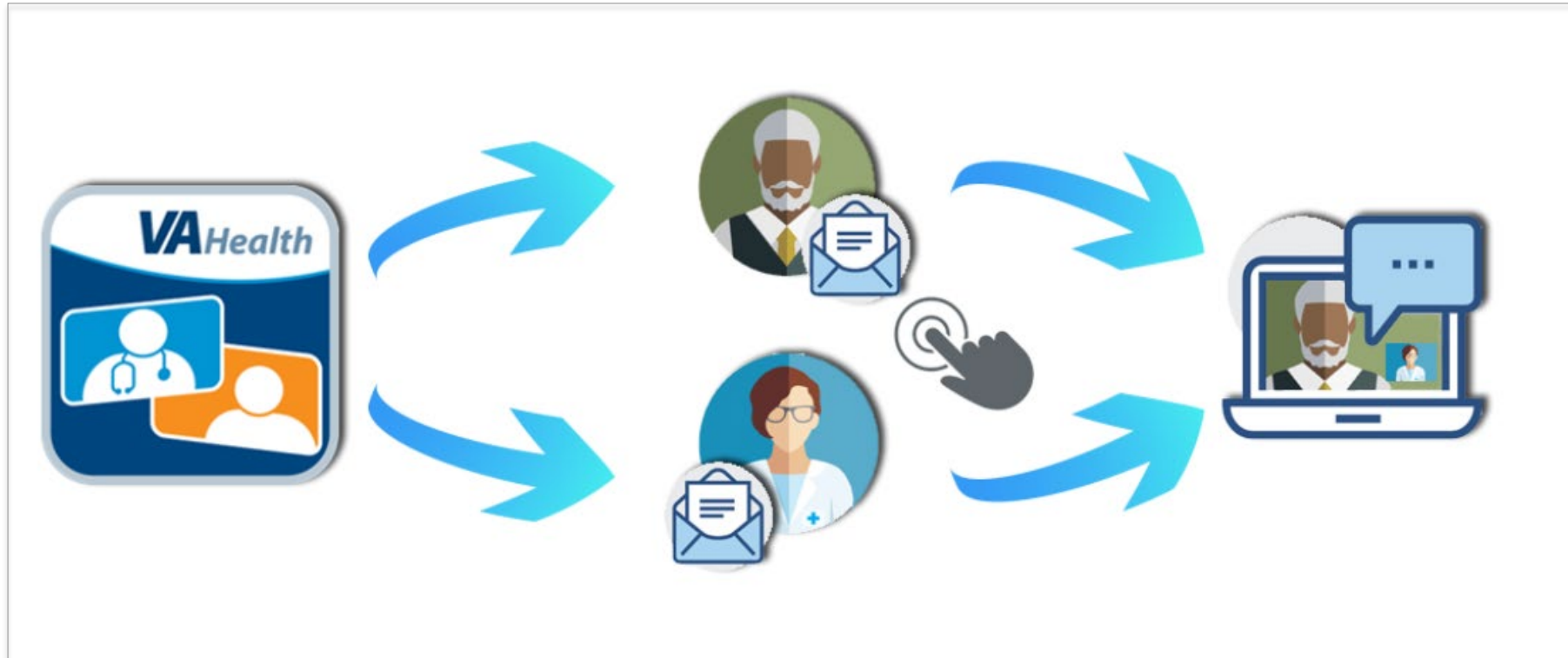


VA VIDEO CONNECT

- **Video Conferencing Tool**
 - Web based
- **Secure & Simple**
- **Connects Provider & Veteran**
 - Any device
 - Any location



HOW DOES IT WORK?



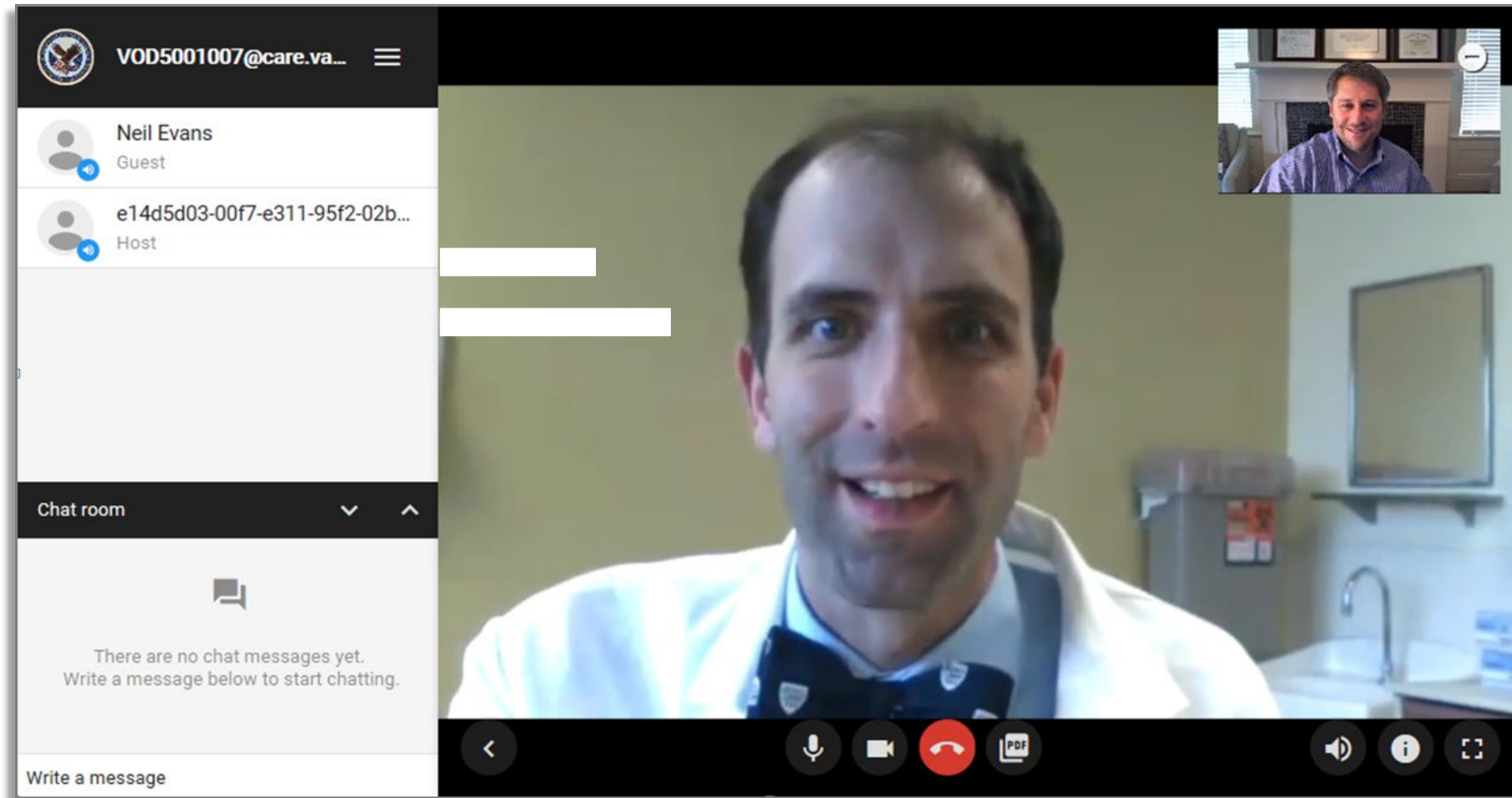
1. Schedule
VA Video Connect Visit

2. Open
Email & Click on link.

3. Join
Virtual Medical Room



Inside the Virtual Medical Room:



Services Offered

TeleAnesthesia

TeleAudiology

TeleCardiology

TeleChaplain

TeleCompensation & Pension

TeleCritical Care **Formerly TeleICU**

TeleDentistry

TeleDermatology

TeleEye Care

TeleGenomics

TeleGI Hepatology

TeleHematology

TeleInfectious Disease

TeleMental Health

TeleMOVE!

TeleNephrology

TeleNeurology

TeleNutrition

TelePathology

TelePharmacy

TelePodiatry

TelePrimary Care

TelePulmonology

TeleRehabilitation

TeleRetinal Imaging

TeleRheumatology

TeleSCI/D

TeleSleep

TeleSpirometry

TeleStroke

TeleSurgery

TeleTransplant

TeleWholeHealth

TeleWound Care

Womens Health

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Approach

Where VA Telehealth Occurs



Home/Community

- Home Telehealth / Remote Monitoring
- VA Video Connect/Care Connect
- Store and Forward in the Home
- ATLAS



Clinic

- Video Telehealth
 - Primary Care
 - Mental Health
 - 50+ specialties
- Store and Forward Telehealth
- Provider Connect



Hospital

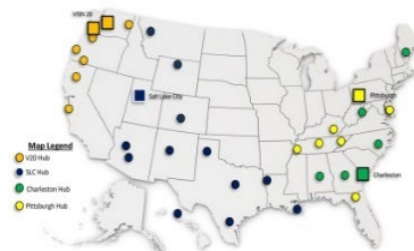
- TeleCritical Care
- TeleStroke
- Tele-Nephrology
- More ...

How VA Implements Telehealth



Local

*Connected Care
Integration into all
routine operations*



Regional

*Sharing/Distributing high volume
services across VA networks*



National

*Delivering access to rare, specialized
expertise at any location.*

VA Telehealth: Why It Matters

- **Accessibility** – Bringing care to Veterans.
- **Capacity** – Matching clinical supply and demand.
- **Quality** – Providing the right care at the right time.
- **Veteran and Provider Experience** – Fitting in with Veterans' lives and meeting their needs.



3. Our Scope and Data

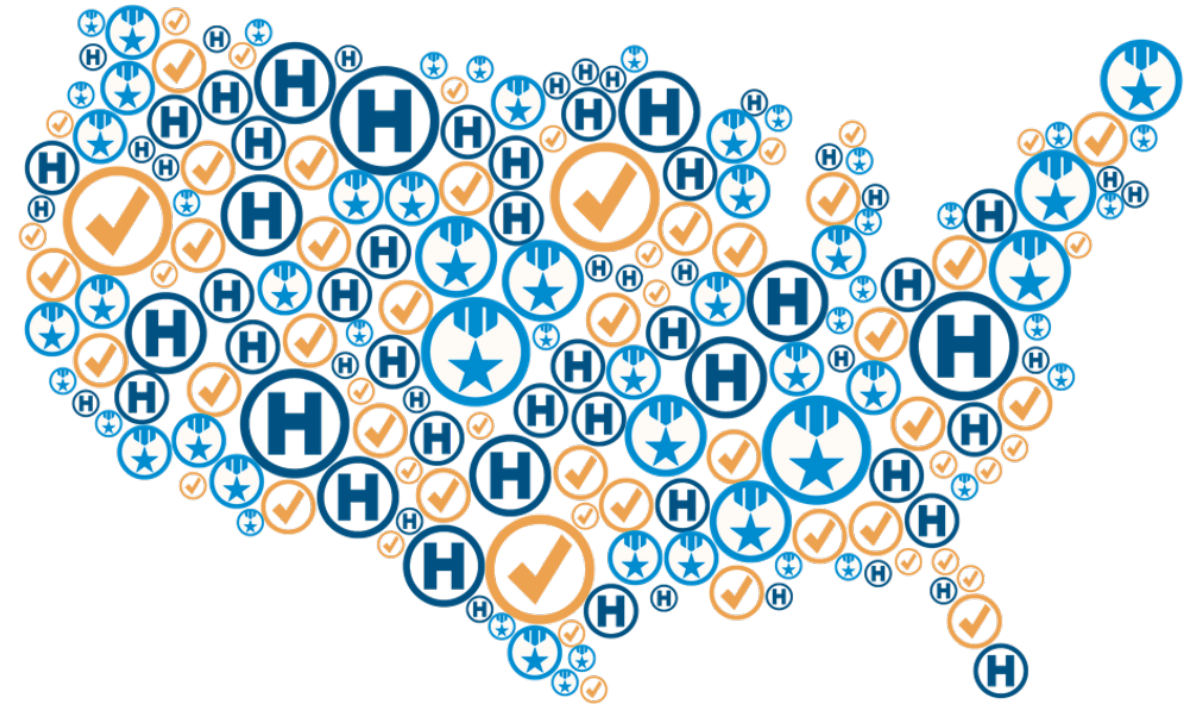
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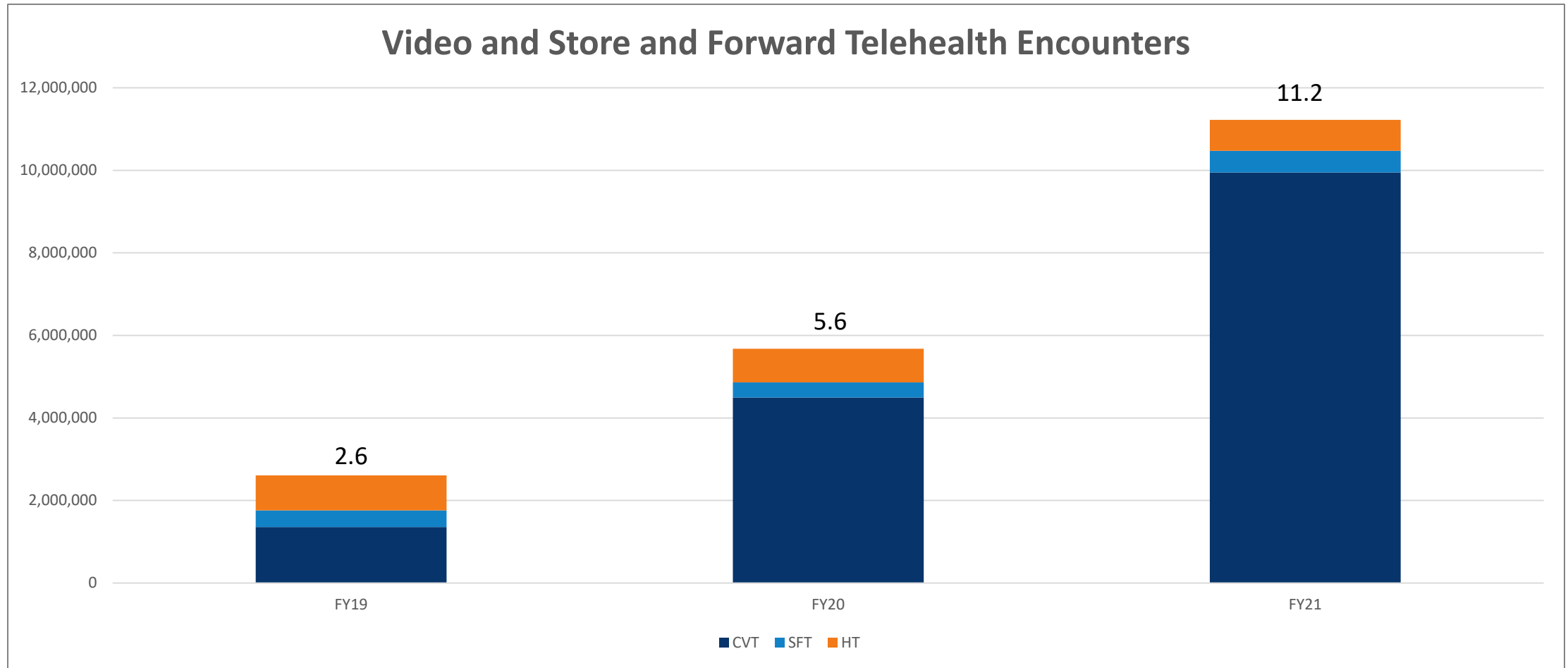
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Overall FY21 Data

- ✓ VHA is the largest telehealth provider in the United States
- ✓ >11.2 million episodes of care
- ✓ >9.5 million video visits to home
- ✓ >2.3 million Veterans served
- ✓ >67,000 digital divide consultations
- ✓ >104,000 Veterans with iPads

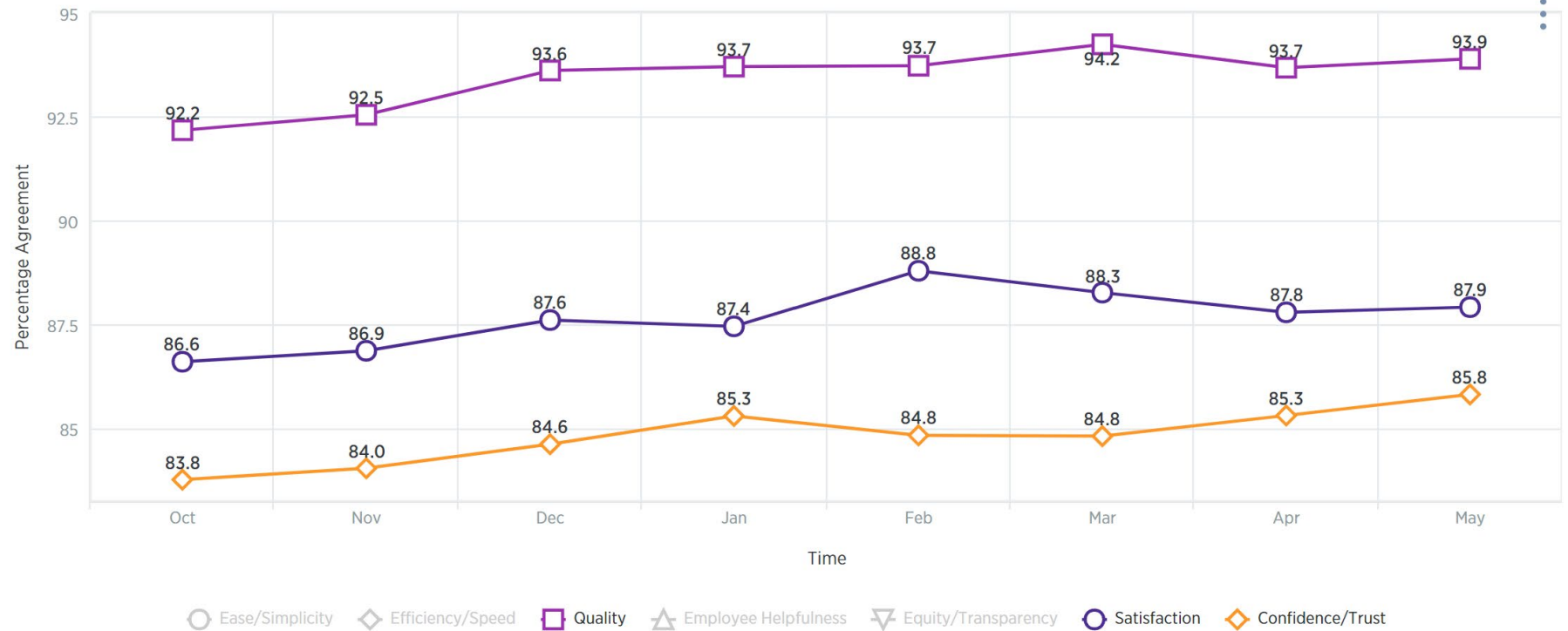


Year Over Year Growth

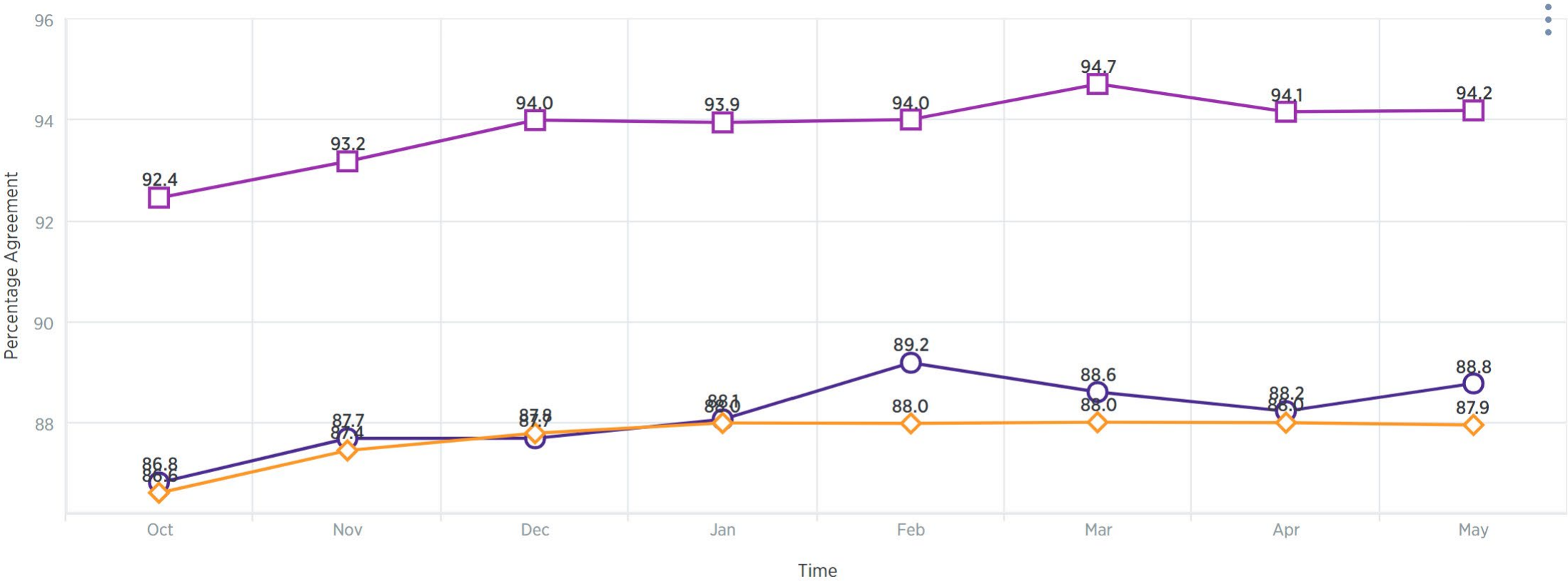


Veteran Experience (FY22 Overall Through May)

“The VA telehealth program really saved my life when I had COVID-19, because every single day, I had someone who was checking on me at home. My telehealth nurse checked on my symptoms and encouraged me through my feelings of helplessness and depressive episodes.”



Our Experience (Video to Home)

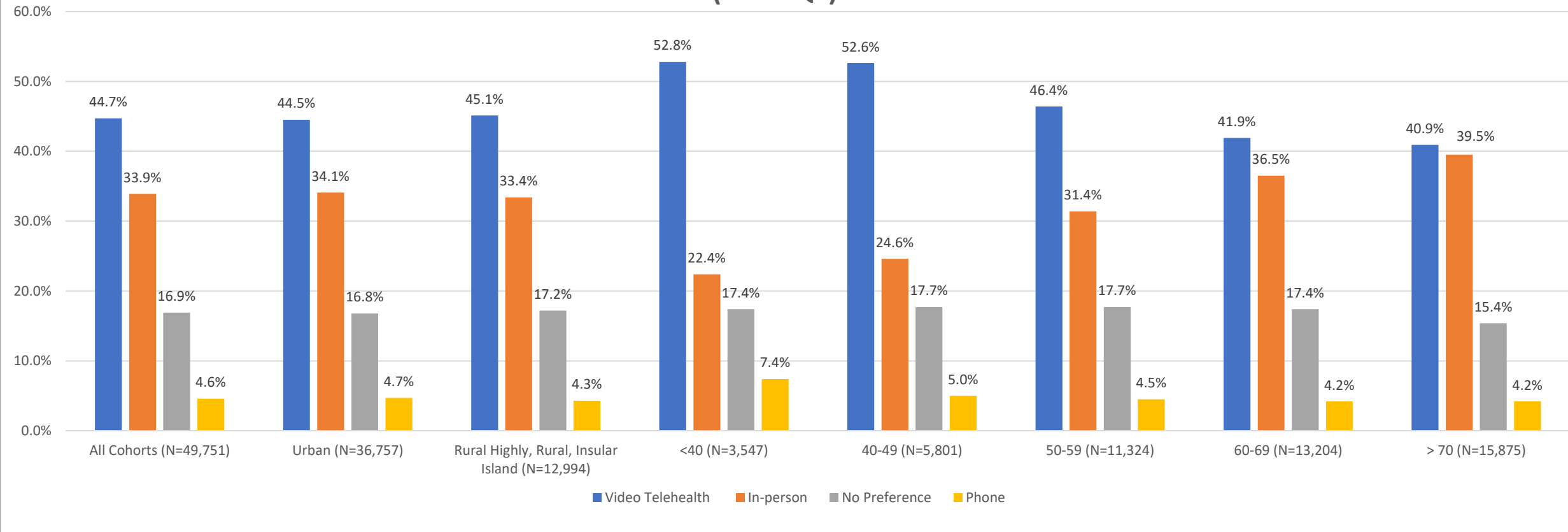


○ Ease/Simplicity
◇ Efficiency/Speed
□ Quality
△ Employee Helpfulness
▽ Equity/Transparency
● Satisfaction
◆ Confidence/Trust

Source: VSSC

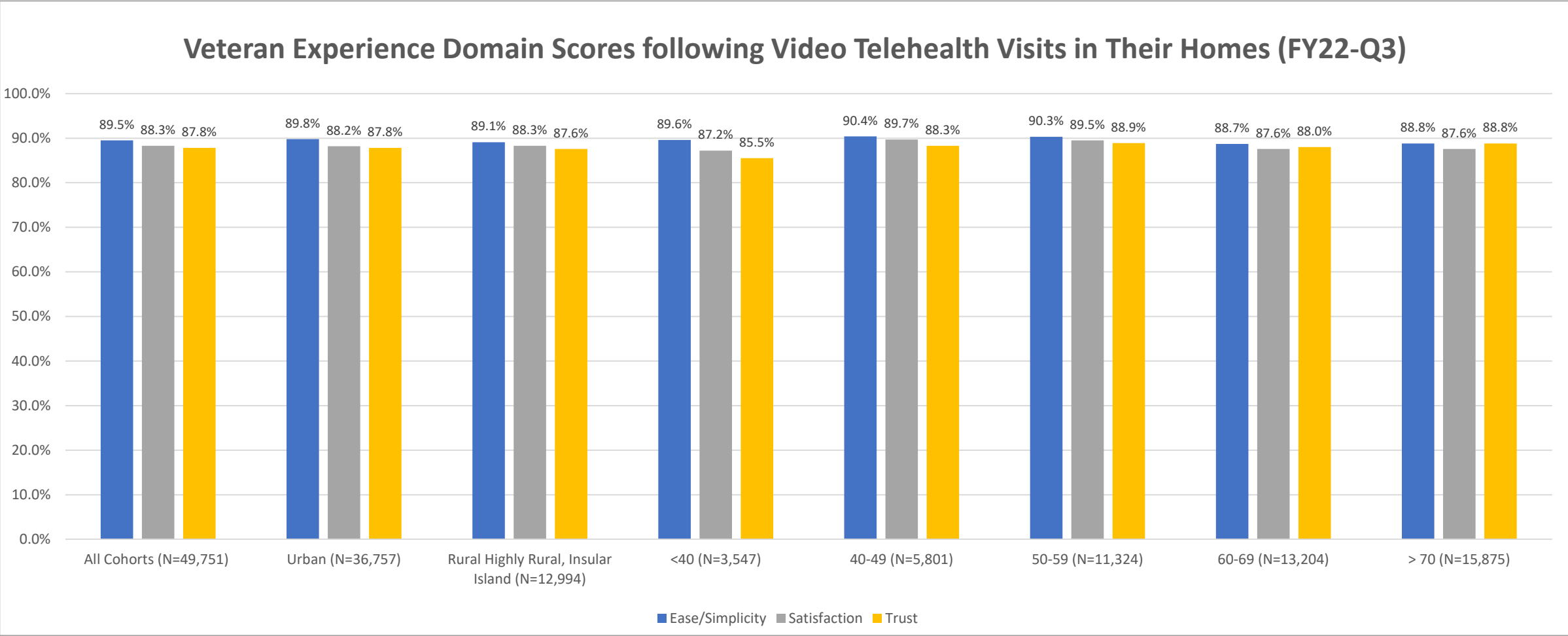
Veteran Experience

Veteran Preference for Care When Surveyed Following Video Telehealth Visits in their Home (FY22-Q3)



Veteran Experience Across Video-to-Home

Veteran Experience Domain Scores following Video Telehealth Visits in Their Homes (FY22-Q3)



Source: VSSC

4. Our Vision and Goals

VA



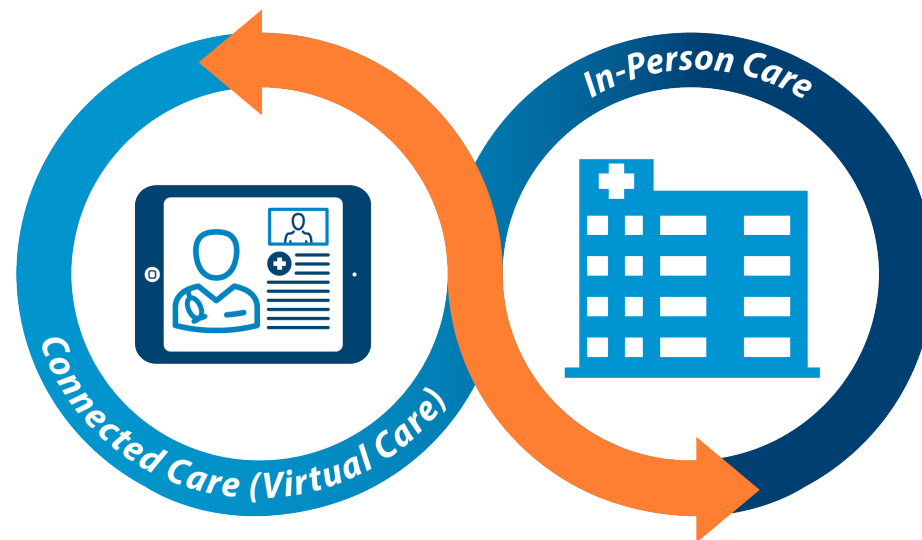
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Our Vision

Trusted Care: Anytime, Anywhere

VA will use connected technologies to enhance the **accessibility, capacity, quality,** and **experience** of VA care for Veterans, their families, and their caregivers **anywhere in the country.**

Connected Care will be **integrated** into the daily lives of both **VA staff members** and the **Veterans** they serve.



Five Year Strategic Plan

Strategic Vision: 2021 – 2025



Trusted Care: Anytime, Anywhere



GOAL 1:
Enhance Veteran
Digital
Engagement



GOAL 2: Deliver
Health Care
Without Walls



GOAL 3: Solidify
Connected Care
Foundations



Strategies



Enhance Veteran Digital Engagement

Strategy 1 | Build an Engaging Digital Front Door

Strategy 2 | Support Veterans in Managing Their Own Health



Deliver Health Care Without Walls

Strategy 1 | Deliver Care in the Home

Strategy 2 | Expand Clinical Capacity

Strategy 3 | Empower VA's Workforce to Deliver Virtual Care



Solidify Connected Care Foundations

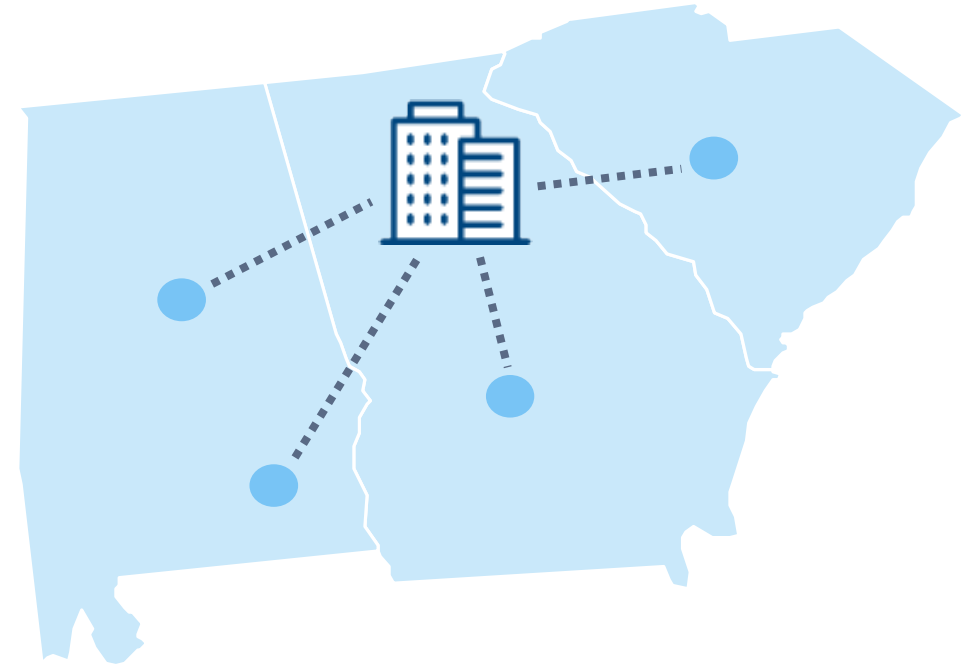
Strategy 1 | Modernize VA's Connected Care Infrastructure

Strategy 2 | Analyze Digital Health Data and Connected Care Program for New Insights

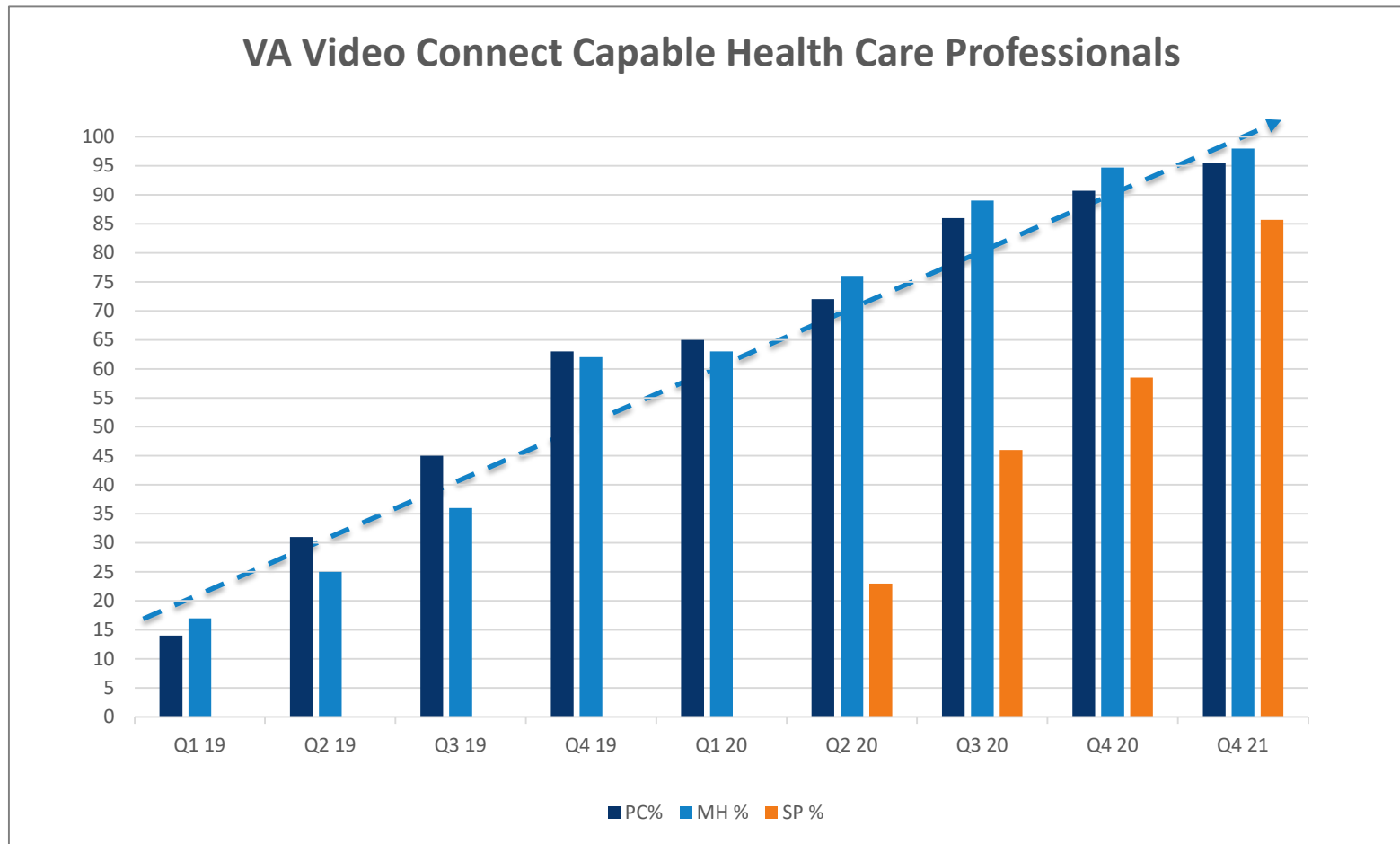
Strategy 3 | Enhance Connected Care Operations and Authorities



Telehealth Clinical Resource Sharing

VA will establish and leverage VISN level Clinical Resource Hubs and Virtual Medical Centers to match and optimize clinical supply and demand of high-volume services across VA facilities to enhance the capacity, equity, and accessibility of VA clinical services.



Set Accessible Targets, Tracked Progress, and Celebrated Success



Distinguished Leader
VA Video Connect
December 2021

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs extends our sincere appreciation for your leadership and dedication to meeting the needs of Veterans, their families, and their caregivers through VA Video Connect.

Your engagement with VA Video Connect during the COVID-19 pandemic helped Veterans receive care in a safe, convenient location of their choice, reducing potential barriers associated with travel and exposure to COVID-19.

Thank you for exemplifying VA's mission to deliver patient-centric, accessible care. We appreciate your hard work in delivering video telehealth to our nation's Veterans.

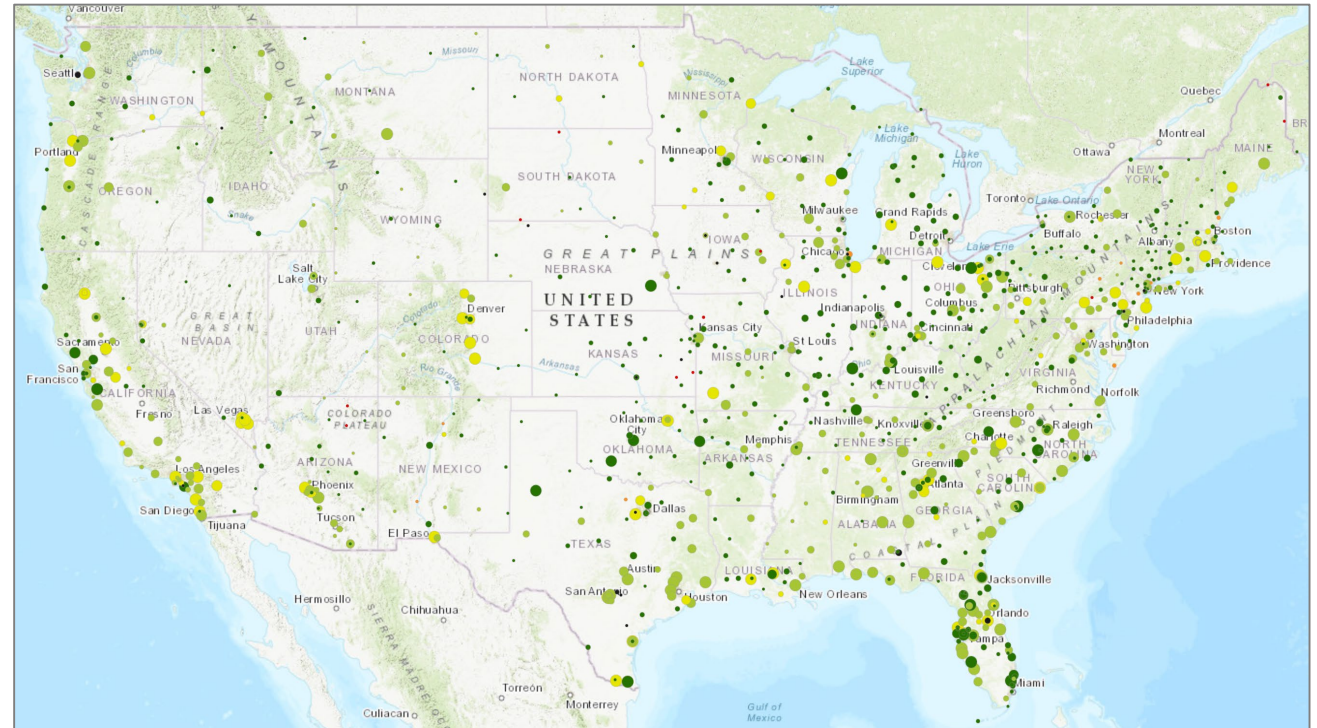
Acting Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology
Chief Officer, Office of Connected Care
Washington, D.C.



Broke Down the Barriers for Health Care Professionals

“§ 1730C. Licensure of health care professionals providing treatment via telemedicine

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any provision of law regarding the licensure of health care professionals, a covered health care professional may practice the health care profession of the health care professional at any location in any State, regardless of where the covered health care professional or the patient is located, if the covered health care professional is using telemedicine to provide treatment to an individual under this chapter.



Broke Down the Barriers for Patients

Zero Rating VA Video Connect

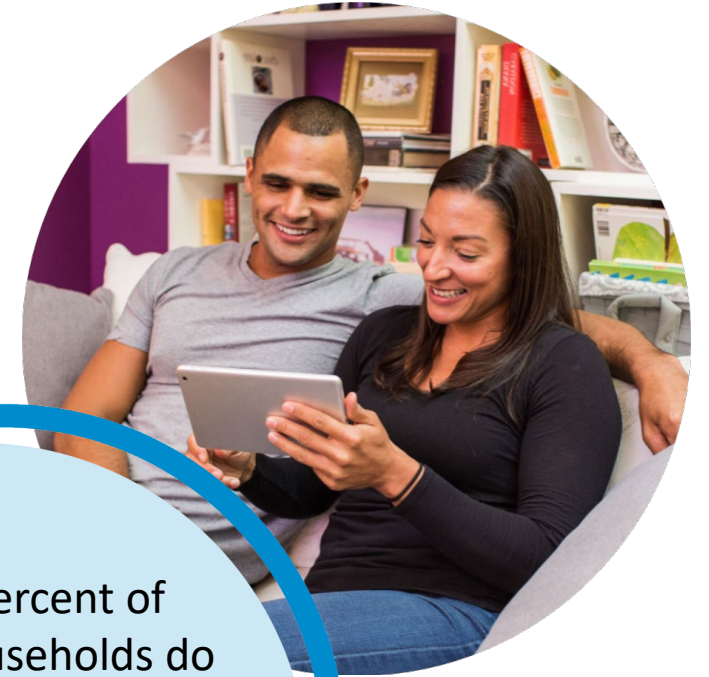
- T-Mobile, Verizon, AT&T, SafeLink by TracFone

Digital Divide Consultation

- Loaned 4G iPads
- Assistance with Federal Subsidies
- Technology discounts

Expanded Patient Technology Support

- National Telehealth Technology Help Desk
- VA Video Connect Test Call Services
- “White-Glove” tablet support



Fifteen percent of
Veteran households do
not have an internet
connection.
*Federal Communications
Commission (FCC), 2019*

Integrated VVC in Existing Workflows

Scheduling System Integration

Return to Clinic Order for Health Care Professionals

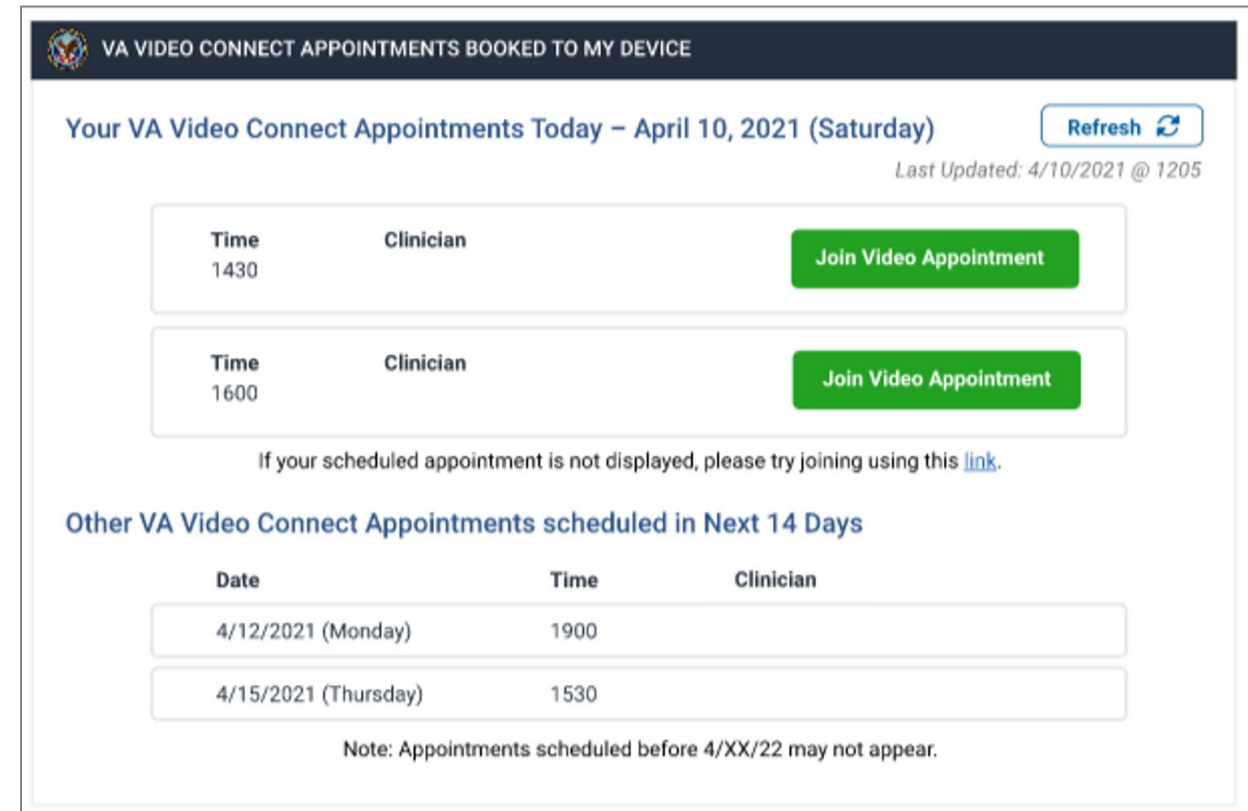
- Return to Clinic Orders will include a check box option allowing health care professionals to annotate future appointment requests with the statement “VVC Appropriate/Offer Option.”
- This check box is relevant when health care professionals are ordering an in-person or telephone follow-up visit but have determined the visit could be completed using VA Video Connect (VVC) if the Veteran prefers.

The screenshot shows the 'Return To Clinic' application window. The 'Prerequisites: (Check all that apply)' section is expanded, and the checkbox for 'VVC Appropriate/Offer Option' is checked. A red arrow points to this checkbox. Below this, the 'More Information' section is highlighted with a red box, containing the following text: '*****ATTENTION - UPDATES TO PREREQUISITES FOR MODALITY OF APPOINTMENT***** A new checkbox choice has been added to the Prerequisite section for communicating with schedulers that Video to home is appropriate for the patient. The prerequisite is: VVC appropriate / Offer Option. Prerequisites that are selected in the order will automatically be sent to the schedulers in the VS GUI scheduling software.'

Worked to Make it Easy

VA Loaner Device App

VA will enhance Veteran and healthcare professional experience by establishing tools and processes so that loaned tablets are scheduled through standard scheduling processes, dynamic links are used in place of static links, and Veterans can easily find and enter their appointments.



The screenshot displays the 'VA VIDEO CONNECT APPOINTMENTS BOOKED TO MY DEVICE' interface. It features a dark header with the VA logo and title. Below the header, the main content area shows 'Your VA Video Connect Appointments Today – April 10, 2021 (Saturday)' with a 'Refresh' button and a timestamp 'Last Updated: 4/10/2021 @ 1205'. Two appointment cards are listed, each with a 'Time' field, a 'Clinician' field, and a green 'Join Video Appointment' button. Below these cards is a note: 'If your scheduled appointment is not displayed, please try joining using this [link](#).' A section titled 'Other VA Video Connect Appointments scheduled in Next 14 Days' contains a table with columns for 'Date', 'Time', and 'Clinician'. The table lists two appointments: one on 4/12/2021 (Monday) at 1900, and another on 4/15/2021 (Thursday) at 1530. A note at the bottom states: 'Note: Appointments scheduled before 4/XX/22 may not appear.'

Time	Clinician	Action
1430	Clinician	Join Video Appointment
1600	Clinician	Join Video Appointment

Date	Time	Clinician
4/12/2021 (Monday)	1900	
4/15/2021 (Thursday)	1530	

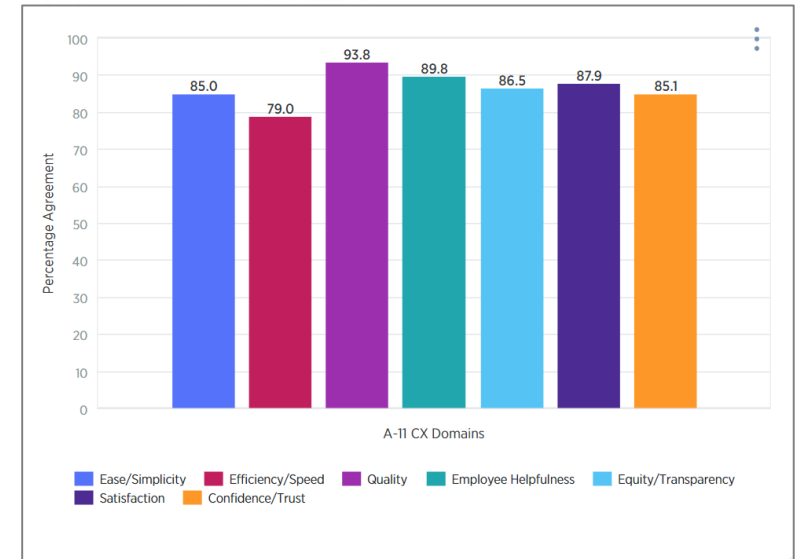
Measured and Course Corrected

Stakeholder Experience Surveys

- VA will maintain Veteran and health care professional experience surveys and integrate their results in management processes to identify and address improvement opportunities.

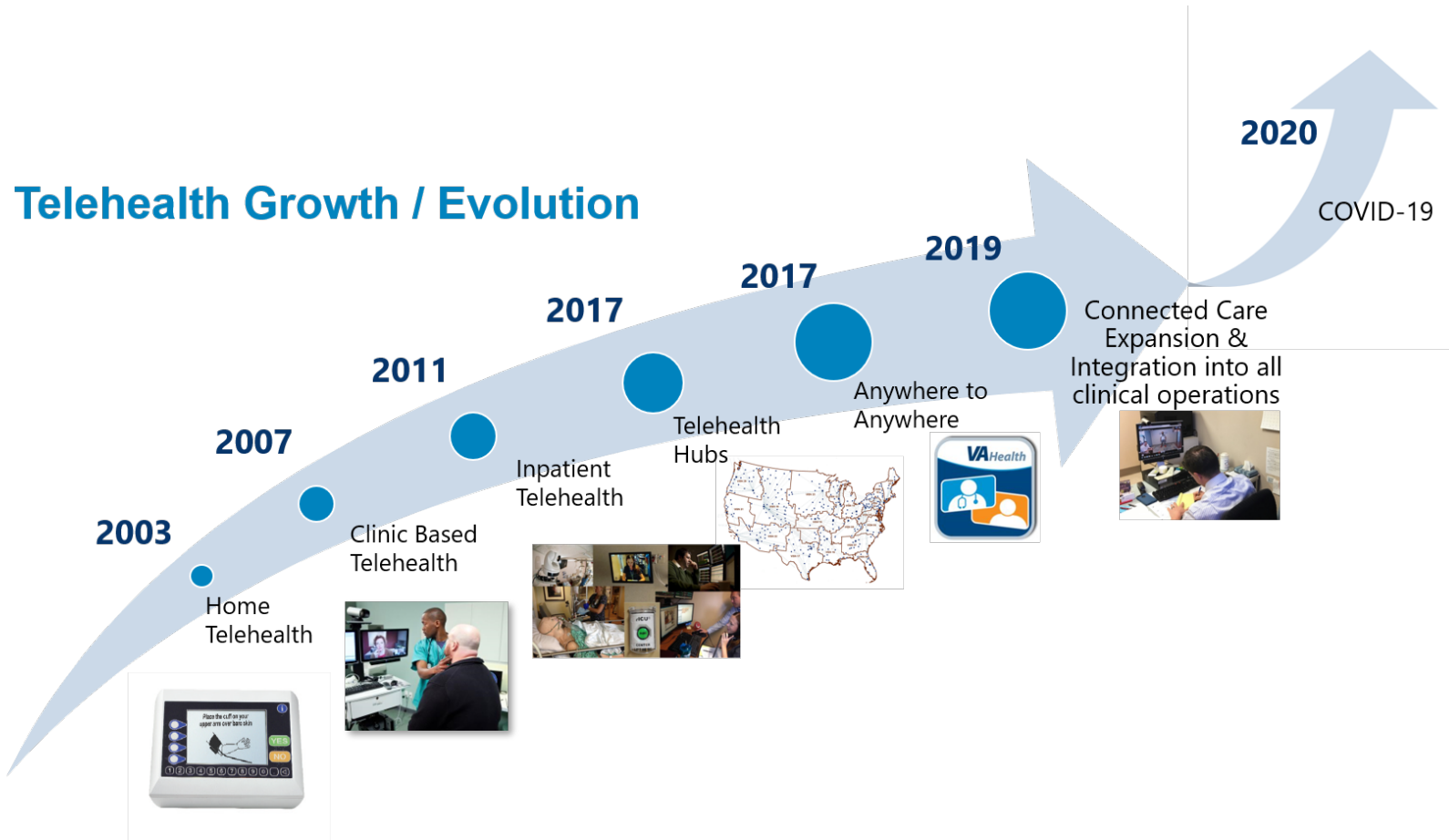
Quality Scorecard

VA will integrate a connected care quality scorecard, metrics, targets, and protocols into quality management processes to identify and address improvement opportunities.



A-11 CX Domain	Definition of each A-11 CX Domain
Ease/Simplicity	It was easy for the survey participant to complete what they needed to do.
Efficiency/Speed	It took a reasonable amount of time for the survey participant to do what they needed to do.
Quality	The needs of the survey participant have been addressed.
Employee Helpfulness	Employees interacting with the survey participant were helpful.
Equity/Transparency	The survey participant felt they were being treated fairly.
Satisfaction	The survey participant is satisfied with the service received.
Confidence/Trust	The survey participant's confidence in the VA has increased as a result of this interaction.

Got Started



5. Future Directions

VA



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Deciding Where To Go Next – My VA TeleHealth Experience

- Create an environment and culture of innovation
- Monitor emerging technologies
- Identify gaps in care or areas that can be improved upon
- Give staff the tools and support and let them create
- Disseminate best practices, provide training and standardization, solicit feedback

Creating a Foundation for Innovation and Help People Dream

ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth Through Local Area Stations)

- Aims to enhance the accessibility of VA care for Veterans in their communities and helps bridge the digital divide.
- Offers an alternative experience to telehealth at home or routine care at the local VA facility, by providing a private space, free of distractions, that is also comfortable and affords a living room like setting to receive care.
- Initiative included:
 - System to schedule telehealth visits in private spaces
 - Infection control protocols
 - Training and guidance
 - Communication plans and toolkits
 - Tools for evaluating the community surrounding a potential telehealth access station



Connected Care Programs

VA Telehealth

- Asynchronous Store and Forward Telehealth
- ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations)
- Clinical Resource Hubs
- Hospital telemedicine
- Remote Patient Monitoring – Home Telehealth
- Synchronous Telehealth
- VA Video Connect

VA Telehealth Services website:
telehealth.va.gov



- Appointments
- Blue Button (download my Health Records)
- Secure Messaging
- Veterans' Health Library

My HealthVet web portal:
myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home

VA Mobile

- Apps for Health Care Professionals
- Apps for Veterans
- Examples:
 - Annie apps
 - MOVE! Coach
 - VA Online Scheduling

VA Mobile website:
mobile.va.gov

Summary: Our Role

- Establishing the vision, strategy, tactics
- Setting accessible targets and measures
- Overcoming barriers for staff and patients
- Making it easy
- Obtaining the data, tracking, and course correcting
- Giving people permission to get started
- Creating a foundation for further innovation
- Letting people dream



Walter W. Worthington, Sr (1929-2015)
US Army, 2nd Armored Division



Questions?



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Resources

- [VHA Telehealth Services \(va.gov\)](#)
 - [VA.gov Home | Veterans Affairs](#)
 - [VA Office of Connected Care](#)
-
- Contact: darrin.worthington@va.gov