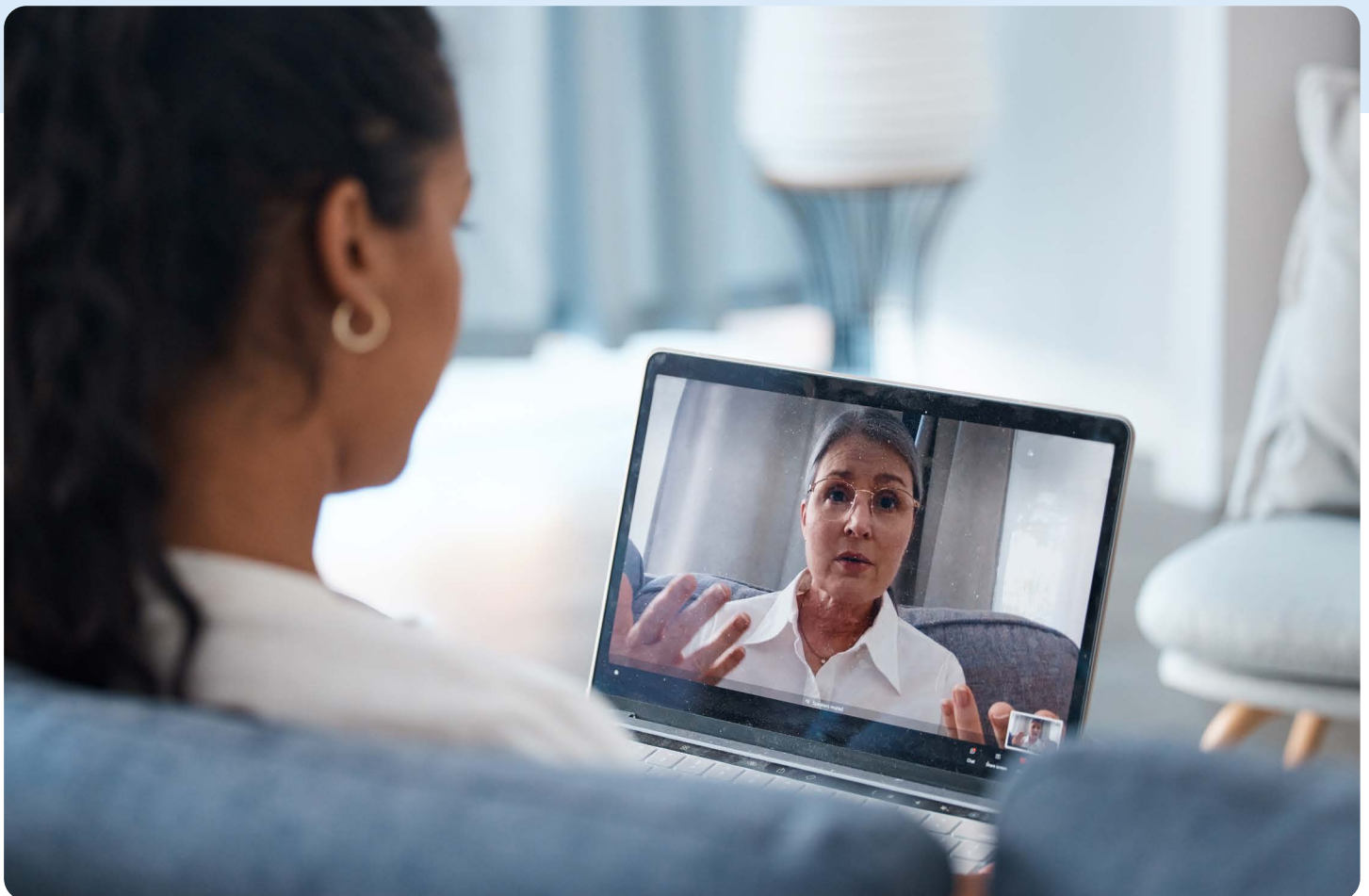


Why Virtual-First Care is a Health System's Best Solution for Patient Keepage

Done well, virtual-first care seamlessly expands access and keeps patients within an integrated network of care



Health systems are navigating an increasingly complex landscape—working to attract and retain patients who have lost trust in providers and systems, adapt to major health coverage changes, and compete with new care options such as direct-to-consumer services and payer-led networks.

Keeping patients attributed to the system is becoming more difficult, putting pressure on razor-thin margins and undermining efforts to deliver coordinated, high-quality care across the patient journey.

Forward-looking health systems can respond with a different approach: whole-person, virtual-first care delivery that honors patient choice, integrates deeply with the EMR, and operates in union with in-person care teams. Unlike traditional telehealth models, which focus on episodic engagement or require separate subscriptions, virtual-first care empowers patients to choose how, when, and

where they receive care, while enabling long-term relationships with dedicated virtual care providers. For strained health systems, virtual-first care is an opportunity to offer patients more—freedom, flexibility, confidence, and access—with less.

When thoughtfully embedded into existing care models, virtual-first services like virtual primary care can help reduce leakage and increase patient “keepage” by driving downstream referrals, strengthening continuity, and supporting sustainable revenue growth.

What We Mean by “Patient Keepage”

Patient keepage measures how often patients continue receiving care within a health system or network rather than seeking services elsewhere—the opposite of patient leakage. Improving keepage requires two things: (1) making it easy for patients to access needed services within the system, and (2) ensuring those services are available and visible at the right moment in the care journey. Keepage also depends on effective care coordination that establishes—and schedules—the patient’s next step. In short, keepage goes beyond referrals; it creates a closed-loop, low-friction path for patients to complete care in-network.

Stronger keepage improves outcomes by enabling patients to follow through on referrals quickly and by keeping their data connected across all of their providers. This continuity reduces redundant intake

processes and unnecessary repeat testing while maintaining a complete, up-to-date medical record so your patients can expect an efficient, competent, and respectful experience every visit.



The Challenge: Why Hospitals Lose Patient Loyalty

Patient leakage has many causes, but lack of convenient access remains one of the most significant. Americans increasingly expect choice and flexibility, but traditional healthcare models require patients to work around limited schedules and locations. Additionally, many systems treat virtual care as a simple add-on rather than a strategic lever for expanding access, failing to offer more convenient hours, easy self-scheduling, or opportunities for patients to develop meaningful relationships with dedicated virtual providers. This narrow approach does not realize the full value of a virtual-first strategy or recognize that patients own the patient-provider relationship.

Meeting people where they are—on their time and in the modality of their choice—is a clear advantage of virtual-first care. In fact, convenience ranks as the number 1, 2, and 3 reasons that [patients prefer virtual visits](#), according to a survey from Deloitte, and for good reason: virtual care removes barriers that cause missed care, fragmented follow-up, and, ultimately, leakage.

Virtual-First Care: The Engine of Patient Keepage

High-quality care can be virtual-first without being virtual-only. The goal is a single, integrated experience that lets patients move fluidly between virtual and in-person services inside your network. When thoughtfully designed, virtual-first models don't just curb leakage; they generate keepage by growing downstream referrals, strengthening care continuity, and capturing more orders in-network.

Here's how virtual-first care operationalizes keepage:

- 1 No wrong door and easy access**
24/7 self-scheduling, easy ability for rapid triage, and first-available appointments reduce defection at the moment of need.
- 2 Closed-loop referrals and orders**
The referral is created and routed to your preferred provider network, with automated reminders and easy rescheduling to prevent drop-off.

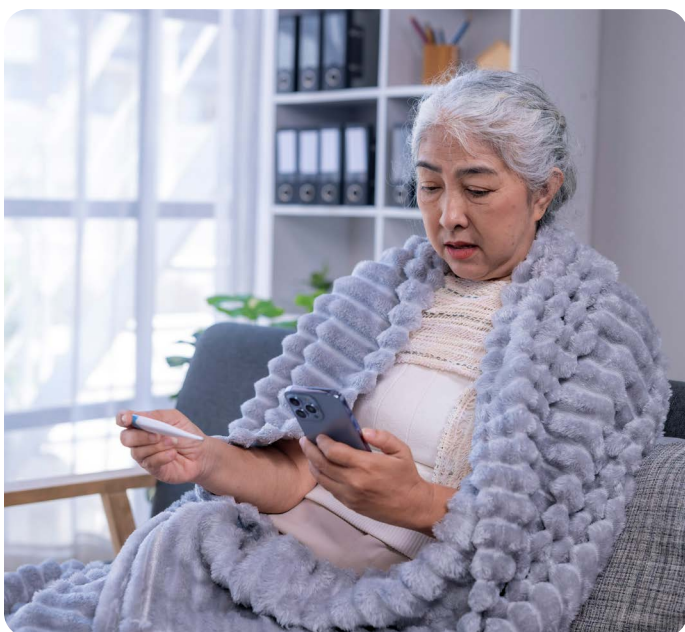
- 3 Deep EMR integration**
One integrated chart. One aligned care plan—shared across every touchpoint. When nothing gets lost in the handoff, patients have no reason to go elsewhere.
- 4 Dedicated virtual care relationships**
Patients who have a provider they know—and who knows them—don't look anywhere else. Our virtual-first clinicians offer continuity, not one-off encounters.
- 5 Local by design**
Virtual-first clinicians, like those at Ovatient, understand your service lines, facilities, and community resources and refer accordingly—so the “next step” is your cardiology clinic, your imaging center, your pharmacy.
- 6 Proactive navigation**
Care coordinators and digital nudges close gaps in care, manage prior authorizations, and make it simple to keep care in-network.
- 7 Transparent discovery**
By embedding virtual-first services in your website, provider directory, and Patient Access Center, you can ensure patients find virtual options inside the system first.

Trust is the Multiplier

Delivering phenomenal patient satisfaction isn't just about convenience. It's also about building trust. People trust a health system based on [three main factors](#): reliability, or making sure patients can access care based on their preference for virtual or in-person care; competence, which involves delivering high-quality, efficient, and informed care; and respect by treating patients with dignity and in a way that recognizes their unique needs. Patients who trust their healthcare system are [300% more likely](#) to recommend it to others.

Delivering Local Virtual Care: What it Looks Like in Practice

High-quality care can be virtual-first, but that doesn't mean it's virtual-only. When building out a virtual-first care strategy founded on trust, it is critical that your virtual care team is completely integrated with your system's in-person care team, including leveraging your health system's EMR. Virtual providers must understand your community, your health system and its services, as well as your area's available resources.



At Ovatient, we have led the development and implementation of successful virtual-first care strategies for health systems like MUSC Health in Charleston, S.C. and The MetroHealth System in Cleveland, Ohio. Our full-time care teams work directly in the Epic EMR, purpose-built for virtual care, and deliver care through MyChart. Patients can self-schedule virtual-first urgent care, primary care, and integrated behavioral health visits that are embedded within their trusted local health system's website, provider directory, and Patient Access Centers—ensuring every interaction fits seamlessly into existing care journeys.

Because Ovatient's care team works in the Epic EMR, clinical data is shared seamlessly between patients' care teams. And our approach goes beyond technology alone: providers are credentialed by the systems we serve, follow the same policies and procedures, and align to shared quality metrics. Though our clinicians are distributed nationwide, they receive comprehensive community-specific training—down to the neighborhood level. **Our care is virtual-first, but local always.**

Thousands of patients have established an Ovatient provider as their dedicated PCP, which allows us to build long-lasting relationships, refer them to additional health system services like specialists, and leverage your investments in your pharmacy and ancillary services. In just over a year of providing care, we've treated more than 24,000 patients, delivered 50,000 visits, driven over 35,000 referrals and orders, and earned a net-promoter score above 76. And we've gotten amazing feedback, like one patient who recently wrote us:



Fast and well-coordinated with [my health system's] pharmacy. Received medicine in a matter of couple hours. I would recommend."

— An Ovatient patient

Prioritizing Patient Preference and Future-Proofing Care Delivery

Research shows virtual care remains [an integral part of health care](#) delivery in the United States. Virtual-first care represents the next step in this space. Not just an add-on service delivered in a silo, virtual-first care is an integrated strategy health systems can deploy to sustain their growth and strengthen patient relationships for the future.

Health systems that prioritize patient preference with virtual-first care also gain a competitive advantage. A virtual-first model can future-proof care delivery for health systems, helping them regain competitive ground in an increasingly digital marketplace. As Deloitte analysts wrote in an [October 2024 report](#), *“By aligning with consumer expectations and leveraging digital advancements, health systems can enhance patient satisfaction, secure their market position, and improve financial performance. The future of health care is increasingly digital, and those who embrace this shift could be well-positioned to thrive in an evolving market.”* We couldn’t agree more.

In just over a year of providing care...

24,000 Patients Treated	50,000 Visits
35,000 Referrals & Orders	76+ NPS



Set a new standard in virtual care

Ovatient puts a person – not just a patient – at the center of how they receive care and improve their health. Schedule a meeting and a member of our leadership team will show you how our virtual-first care model and digital health platform deliver better virtual care experiences for patients and providers.

[Request a Demo](#)

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