



# Bridging the Patient-Provider Divide: **Increasing Patient Access with Digital Health Tools**

By MedBridge

# Overview

Patient access is a key component to increasing patient engagement and activation, but the journey to connect the clinician and patient is often challenging. Even if patients actively want to seek help with their condition, the reality of everyday life has a way of creating its own barriers to care. And after treatment is started, drop-offs due to lack of engagement can start piling up, resulting in no-shows and cancellations.

That’s why it’s crucial for healthcare organizations to increase patient access by removing as many barriers to care as possible to ensure that patients not only have every opportunity to seek treatment in the first place, but see their entire care plan through from start to finish. However, outreach isn’t easy and we all know that clinician time isn’t unlimited—so what can we do to help get patients in the door and keep them adhering to their treatment plans?

## MedBridge is here to help. In this guide we’ll cover how digital health tools can help providers:

- Expand treatment options and increase access for patients
- Boost patient engagement
- Overcome barriers to adherence and activation

# Table of Contents

Improve Access to Care .....	3
Expand Treatment Options .....	4
Boost Patient Engagement .....	6
Overcome Barriers to Adherence and Activation.....	8
How MedBridge Can Help .....	9
Conclusion.....	10



## DIGITAL HEALTH TOOLS

# Improve Access to Care

Your doors could be open all day, everyday, and even Christmas Day, but if you aren't offering a diverse range of options for care, many patients still won't be able to make it through your doors as often as they would like to. Physical barriers like reliable transportation, time constraints like busy work schedules, and family obligations like arranging child care can create very real obstacles that pile up and prevent crucial care from taking place for weeks, months, and even years.

By using digital health tools to expand treatment options, you can continue to treat, engage, and inform patients even when they aren't able to physically make it for an in-person session. Here are a few ways you can use digital health tools to expand treatment options, boost patient engagement, overcome barriers to adherence, and ultimately improve access to care.



### Digital Therapy

Learn more about digital therapy and how it works from our infographic [\*\*Digital Therapy: The New Frontier of Healthcare\*\*](#)



## DIGITAL HEALTH TOOLS

# Expand Treatment Options

## Telehealth

For better or worse, the days of ‘three times a week for six weeks’ are probably in the rear view mirror. That’s why it’s important for us to keep our eyes on the road ahead, and focus on how we can treat our patients who come in once a week or even once a month. Digital health tools are a way to expand treatment options and bridge the gap to our patients in a way that aligns with our modern world.

One of the most well-known digital health tools, telehealth has exploded in popularity in recent years, and the flexibility and cost savings it provides have kept it a popular option for clinicians and their patients. Virtual care consultations can be offered as a standalone option or as a supplement to in-person care, making telehealth ideal for low-risk interventions as well as check-ins along the way.



**Telehealth has been shown to cut down on no-shows and cancellations by removing physical barriers to care, and has been shown to reduce travel time,<sup>1</sup> improve convenience,<sup>2</sup> and increase overall access to care.<sup>3</sup>**

# Expand Treatment Options

## Continued

### Mobile Apps for Remote Patient Monitoring

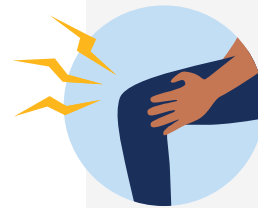
Imagine, as a patient, that after your last set of exercises, your knee started flaring up and you don't know why. You look outside and the sidewalks have been pretty icy all week—you want to make your PT appointment on Monday, but you think maybe it's best not to risk it.

Now imagine that you have a magic door to your clinician's office that you can open up with the tap of your finger, housed right between Instagram and your daily crossword app. Suddenly, you can ask your clinician about your knee, schedule a check-in, and provide pain/difficulty feedback in a format that's not constrained by office hours and risky winter weather. In another scenario, you might have decided to cancel your appointment entirely—that's the flexibility that patient mobile apps provide.

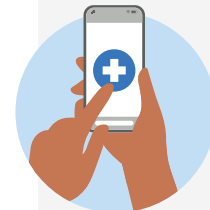
Best of all, that magic door works both ways. Providers can use clinician-facing apps to monitor patient progress and gain powerful insights with data-reporting tools built into the app. Now, the clinician is aware of the increased knee pain and can answer questions, adjust the patient's treatment plan, and keep the appointment—either in-person or via telehealth, according to the patient's needs.

And while every patient's technological literacy is different, in recent years the generational gap in smartphone ownership has dramatically shrunk. Smartphone ownership and usage has increased significantly in recent years to 96 percent of adults ages 50 to 65 and 75 percent of adults over the age of 65,<sup>4</sup> making this a viable strategy for a large proportion of patients, which is growing every year.

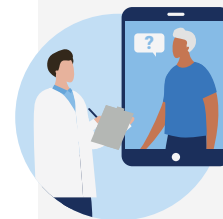
### The Mobile App Journey



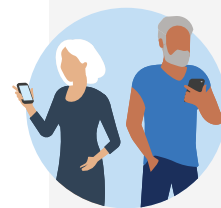
Patient has knee pain during exercises, but their appointment is next week!



Patient reports pain via MedBridge GO app.



Clinician sees issue and provides new exercise guidance.



Not just for Gen Z! Older adults are more tech savvy than ever.<sup>4</sup>



## DIGITAL HEALTH TOOLS

# Boost Patient Engagement

## Home Exercise Programs

An old saying goes, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.” Patient engagement works in a similar way.

Patients who are engaged with their care plans are more likely to have better outcomes than patients who are less engaged. In fact, a higher perception of self-efficacy after discharge from physical therapy is associated with better perceived clinical improvement, lower pain intensity, and a lower number of physical therapy sessions.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, disengaged patients are three times as likely to have unmet medical needs and two times as likely to delay medical care.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most effective ways to cultivate patient engagement is through effective digital home exercise programs. An effective HEP platform helps keep patients engaged—and provides important care continuity when patients cannot make an in-person visit, or when a visit is unnecessary. It’s also effective at boosting patient progress between visits while reducing the cost and time commitment of supervised therapy sessions for providers. This helps patients stay on track with their care plan, and provides flexibility to their exercise regimen, making it easier for them to fit it into their busy schedule.



### Customer Story

Using these lessons, MedBridge helped increase **CORA Physical Therapy's** patient conversion rate by **9 percent** and enhanced clinician engagement by **110 percent**. [Read our success story here.](#)

# Boost Patient Engagement

## Continued

### Patient Education

Imagine again that, out of the magic door, a stack of therapy exercises appeared and landed gracefully on the patient's desk. A pretty impressive feat, but why would a patient feel motivated to do repetition after repetition of lateral leg raises if they didn't have the context to understand how it will improve their condition? Or worse yet, if they didn't fully understand their condition in the first place?

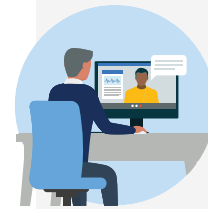
A patient's understanding of their condition and treatment plan is an important component of their engagement, but clinician time is at a premium. Fortunately, effective online patient education can provide access to education for a larger population. With a comprehensive online patient education library, clinicians can assign standardized resources to patients so they can learn more about their condition at their own convenience.

This way patients can come to each appointment with a more thorough understanding of their condition, and the visit can be spent on providing treatment, discussing care plans, or answering patient questions to help them fully understand both the 'how' and the 'why.'

### Patient Education Gives Context to Care Plans



More lateral leg raises? But why?



Online patient education helps patient understand how this exercise will help.



Patient comes to next appointment prepared and ready to go.



## DIGITAL HEALTH TOOLS

# Overcome Barriers to Adherence and Activation

## Patient Adherence Tracking Tools

You can send your patient home with enough patient education resources to fill your local library, but if your patients aren't activated and adhering to their treatment plans, they aren't going to get better. Digital patient adherence tracking not only helps flag questions or pain and difficulty with prescribed HEP before a larger problem arises, it also provides a structure of accountability. Because the clinician has more visibility, it's easier to not only set expectations for the patient, but also provide the support they need to see their program through. This allows for a greater therapeutic alliance than would be possible with a program on a piece of paper.

This can also help clinicians proactively mitigate issues before they lead to the dips in engagement, increases in cancellations, and decreases in patient progress that lead to negative outcomes.

EMRs are a commonly used resource for tracking pain and difficulty levels and communicating with patients between visits to identify adherence barriers and improve outcomes, but incorporating a mobile app element takes patient adherence tracking tools to the next level. This once again opens our 'magic door' that gives patients an easy way to self-report pain and difficulty, as well as ask questions about the program.

It also allows clinicians to send programs via mobile app, text message, or email, giving them direct access to patients between visits. You can also set up automated program notifications for inactivity, reminders, and program updates to keep patients activated and adhering to their treatment plans.

## Remote Therapeutic Monitoring

Providing remote care to patients via high-quality digital healthcare technologies improves access to care, resulting in better patient outcomes, satisfaction, and retention. The beauty of RTM is that it can be incorporated with the aforementioned digital health tools to improve patient adherence and engagement and collect better data, all while adding an additional revenue stream!

Providers can monitor non-physiologic patient data, including program adherence, pain levels, and patient feedback; communicate with patients between sessions using in-app messaging and virtual visits; and adjust the program as needed to optimize patient outcomes. And with the new CPT codes, providers can now be reimbursed for providing that additional care to Medicare patients.





## How MedBridge Can Help Improve Patient Access

Digital health tools work best when they're used together. MedBridge gives you everything you need to provide a complete solution to keep your patients engaged, activated, and adherent—with no assembly required.



### Remote Therapeutic Monitoring

Activate patients, build a powerful therapeutic alliance, and achieve better outcomes with robust engagement and patient monitoring tools and powerful analytics and reporting.



### Telehealth Virtual Visits

Replace or supplement in-person visits for low-risk patients with effective, user-friendly telehealth tools.



### MedBridge GO Mobile App

Engage patients and promote adherence by prescribing home exercises in easy daily doses designed to motivate patients to better manage their conditions.



### Patient Education

Help patients understand their diagnosis and rehabilitation plan with engaging education to encourage them to effectively manage their care plan.



### Home Exercise Program (HEP)

Engage patients with an easily accessible and customizable library with thousands of video exercises developed by industry professionals.



### Net Promoter Score

Capture patient satisfaction with NPS® surveys to help build a patient-inspired culture and highlight areas to target remediation with education.



### Provider Education

Provide evidence-based online education and training covering telehealth, patient engagement, soft skills, and more.

# Conclusion

Though we've broken up these tools to highlight their efficacy at solving different challenges, the real power of digital health is when they're combined to create a comprehensive solution to improve patient access. You can use telehealth to discuss the treatment, assign a digital HEP program to advance their treatment, use patient adherence tracking tools to monitor their progress, and—finally—get reimbursed by billing for this process with remote therapeutic monitoring. With MedBridge, you can create a complete digital healthcare solution.

# References

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## ABOUT MEDBRIDGE

Founded in 2011, MedBridge is an innovator at the intersection of healthcare technology, education, and patient engagement. We have helped more than 2,500 healthcare organizations grow their business, elevate their workforce, and deliver exceptional patient experiences. For more information, visit [medbridgeeducation.com](https://www.medbridgeeducation.com).

See how MedBridge can help your organization.

[Contact us to request a demo.](#)