

THE PROBLEM | Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a preventable and treatable chronic lung condition. Globally, about 328M people suffer from COPD, including 25M in the United States. COPD is among the top causes of disability worldwide and is projected to become the leading cause of death by 2030. In the US alone, annual COPD-related healthcare expenditures exceed \$49B, concentrated in rural and low-income areas where healthcare access and quality suffers. COPD patient utilization of the healthcare system is high, with patients often experiencing multiple exacerbations a year. Costly hospitalizations have a high likelihood of readmission post-discharge. People with COPD are unable to access appropriate care before reaching the hospital for a myriad of reasons, including cost, location, and low awareness of treatment options. This is made worse by the fact that chronic lung disease increases risk for heart, metabolic, and mental health comorbidities, which only exacerbate the healthcare experience making it more inconsistent and heavily siloed for patients.

THE INTERVENTION | Wellinks' virtual first care (V1C) approach reinvents the COPD experience, connecting patients, caregivers, services, and information to enable truly integrated care. Wellinks serves people at all stages of their COPD journey, be it an individual in the community needing support to improve health and avoid an exacerbation, or someone who is post-acute care trying to successfully transition to pulmonary wellness at home. Through Wellinks, barriers to access are dismantled with a kit of devices, software, and a coach meeting patients where they are.

Components:



Synchronous and/or asynchronous virtual interactions between a clinical team and individual



Interdisciplinary approach that includes consults with specialists and other disciplines to provide comprehensive and longitudinal care



Use of biometric and other sensor technologies (e.g. blood pressure cuff, smartwatch)



Patient self-report (e.g. symptom survey, pain scale)



Technical support to accommodate literacy, language, access, and technological barriers to adoption



Care navigation support



Personalized digital content supporting individual education and self-management in their health journey



Dynamic patient monitoring capability

THE RESULTS | Wellinks recognized a massive opportunity to make COPD care more human, leveraging personal connection and improved self-management to achieve improved outcomes, cost reductions, and happy patients. Having innovated exclusively in this space since 2017 and informed by thousands of hours of user research that included over 20,000 people living with respiratory diseases, the Wellinks product contemplates the unique needs of the COPD patient population. In a recent clinical study, users with a mean age of 79 and advanced disease reported the solution easy to use (94%) and showed excellent engagement (100%) over 8 weeks.

“With better COPD-specific virtual tools, we can detect exacerbations, understand medication compliance and usage, and adjust therapy to prevent clinical worsening. This could be immensely useful.”

- Brian Gelbman MD,
Pulmonologist (NYP Cornell)

A CASE STUDY | Carol, a 70 year old grandmother of three, lives alone in rural Iowa. She was officially diagnosed with COPD by her pulmonologist following years of increasing shortness of breath and fits of ‘bronchitis’ that landed her in the hospital several times. To help support Carol’s self-management and keep her healthy at home, she was offered and enrolled in the Wellinks V1C solution. As a Wellinks member, Carol has a relationship with a coach, Emily, who has worked with her to set and work towards activity goals so she’ll be able to travel to her grandson Jacob’s graduation in June. Since joining Wellinks, Carol’s FEV1 and CAT assessment scores have improved since baseline and she is regularly joining for her clinical visits. Carol hasn’t had a single trip to the emergency department since joining Wellinks.

THE BENEFITS | 💰 **Affordability** + 🌐 **Interconnectedness** + 🏆 **Experience** + 👥 **Increased Reach** + ⚙️ **Efficiency** + 📍 **Access**

COPD patients get in-hand V1C access to convenient devices, personalized information, and a caring coach to empower confidence in self-management and deliver peace of mind. The managing pulmonary team benefits from knowing their patient has quality support for the non-clinical high-yield components of COPD management, and that should something require their attention they will be notified proactively. Delivery networks and at-risk entities benefit from bringing affordable care that improves outcomes to their members.

“The key to me is the health coaching and pulmonary rehabilitation in a remote setting. This is definitely a disease where exercise and rehabilitation can improve patients' symptoms, and even progression.” - Chief Medical Officer, Medicare Advantage Plan

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