

Virtual Care and Pharmacy Response



DURING THE 2017 HURRICANE SEASON

Introduction

In times of split decision and uncertainty – before, during and after a disaster – patients have little time to plan ahead and prepare themselves for what's to come their way. Throughout moments like these, communities rely heavily on partnerships to help fill gaps in resources and services, particularly to provide needed medicines and medical supplies. These coordinated efforts have been forged in response to and in the wake of catastrophes

such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and have continued to grow over a decade later, as demonstrated in the momentous 2017 hurricane season when three storms – Harvey, Irma and Maria – sequentially impacted communities in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Puerto Rico.

Note: Virtual care providers are considered a subset of telehealth companies and providers.

Background

Coordination between public and private entities during the 2017 hurricane season was essential to connecting patients to needed resources and medical care. These partnerships spanned the healthcare continuum, and our role at Healthcare Ready included identifying needs on-the-ground through coordination with federal, state, territory, and local government agencies and NGO partners. We also used our relationships and knowledge to bridge gaps in care and resources by connecting with our private partners – including pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies – who had the resources urgently needed within impacted communities.

Due to the unique and historic nature of the 2017 hurricane season, Healthcare Ready maintained a sustained three-month activation to address patient needs and connect our public and private partners for eighty-one days – a record response for our team.

The three hurricanes had vastly different, yet devastating impacts. Government agencies and private companies alike were uniquely challenged in their response efforts, relying on both pre-planned and ad hoc strategies to cope with each individual storm, often times simultaneously. Critical infrastructure damage had tremendous impacts on healthcare access and continuity of patient care.

Public-private response efforts came in all shapes, sizes and variants from pharmacies and virtual care providers. Some assisted by providing free access to general medical care via phone, web and mobile app for displaced patients in shelters, while others contributed technological capabilities to streamline prescription drug access. Because of these efforts, patients and families in need of support, relief and care in the midst and wake of the hurricanes had greater access to medical care that can be otherwise challenging to receive during the uncertainty of a natural disaster. And, likewise, healthcare professionals throughout the country had the ability to assist remotely with recovery efforts where they live and work in a truly essential and meaningful way.

Partnerships, goodwill and innovative approaches from virtual care and health information technology companies and pharmacies helped address unmet needs and fill gaps for those affected.

Private Sector Response in the Wake of a Public Crisis

The critically significant role that the private sector plays before, during and after crises, was exemplified during the 2017 hurricane season. Our private sector partners rose to the challenge with innovative approaches to respond to the immediate, on-the-ground needs of patients, families and providers by partnering with public entities to identify and respond to specific, community- and state-based relief efforts in real time. These efforts were not without their challenges, such as varying state-by-state regulations on data privacy, telehealth regulation, Medicaid reimbursements, and pharmacists' scope of practice.

All of these factors must be considered when crafting multi-community and regional strategies to multiple emergency and disaster relief efforts. These considerations – coupled with limited infrastructure, availability of doctors, medicines, vital resources like

water and food, and communication constraints – meant that public-private and corporate partnerships needed to coordinate and collaborate.

*As evidenced in previous disaster responses, **partnerships were best equipped to devise personalized approaches for each community, state and sometimes individual patient to ensure that, when disasters occurred, patients maintained access to essential care.***

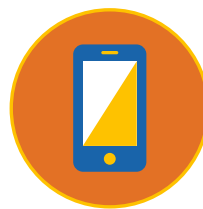
At Healthcare Ready, we are proud of the role we play working with government agencies, non-profit organizations, private companies as well as individual patients to ensure that, when the unthinkable happens, communities, states, patients and providers have the support, resources and medications they need.

Virtual Care Response

The advent of this exciting digital age of healthcare has brought with it vital resources that can be leveraged in the wake of disaster. One key resource with incredible value for disaster response, as demonstrated in 2017, is virtual care which encompasses a variety of capabilities, including:



Matching a state-licensed, trained provider with the patient / patient need



Medical visit via phone or video



Secure review of the patient's medical history and post-visit sharing of the visit-summary with the patient's primary care provider



Identification of a local pharmacy that can provide any needed prescriptions

The 2017 hurricane season was among the first major tests of the emergency and disaster capabilities of telehealth. With the help of the private sector, telehealth proved to be a vital component of the healthcare system's response to these disasters, particularly for evacuees and isolated areas. Innovative organizations such as **Nemours Children's Health System, Teladoc Health, Doctor on Demand** and **MDLive** offered free telehealth and virtual care visits to hurricane victims.

SPOTLIGHT: **Teladoc**
HEALTH

Teladoc Health's Virtual Care Capabilities Ensure Access during Hurricanes Harvey and Irma

Teladoc Health is a global virtual care company successfully transforming how people access and experience healthcare, with a focus on high quality, lower costs, and improved outcomes. Via phone, web and mobile app, the company connects millions of patients to trained virtual care providers. Members can access care across a spectrum of clinical services, including general medicine, dermatology, behavioral health, back care and complex conditions like cancer and heart disease.

Recognizing the mobile nature of society as a whole and particularly their clients, Teladoc Health utilized social and digital media to reach patients in advance of the storm to remind them of their continuous services during and after landfall. In addition, they shared key hurricane preparedness safety tips and reminded patients to plan ahead by refilling needed prescriptions.

In the wake of the unprecedented disasters that befell Texas and Florida in August and September of 2017, respectively, **Teladoc coordinated with the American Red Cross to provide virtual consultations at no cost** within shelters and for displaced patients elsewhere, helping connect displaced patients and families to critical health services, including prescription refills, urgent care and behavioral and mental health. During

Across the impacted areas, virtual care contributed to earlier interventions and delivery of care, enhanced situational awareness and decision-making, improved cost-effectiveness of care and equitable care delivery by educating, informing and empowering patients and caregivers. Its potential to be a valuable asset in key areas of disaster response and public health emergencies is only growing, and it's vital that – with the help of the private sector – every effort is made to incorporate telehealth into preparedness and response.

the course of the 2017 hurricanes, Teledoc's network of 3,100 credentialed physicians provided needed care and comfort to over 1,100 new patients.

The Teladoc services helped fill a critical void in care for patients who lacked access to their pharmacies and/or physicians due to business closures, lack of transportation, service outages and/or physical constraints. These capabilities helped allow equitable patient access to care, and often times were faster and more cost-effective.

“Virtual Care is a vital component of the healthcare delivery system because it is an effective way to assure that people can count on access to quality care whenever and wherever they need it. Then when you look at the factors in place during a natural disaster, when people are displaced and facing other burdens, the ability to count on that care is even more magnified, and virtual care is truly the great equalizer.”

ANNE STOWELL
Vice President of Member Experience
Teladoc Health





Mobile pharmacy being set up at mobile hospital site in Louisville, Miss.

Pharmacy Response

The complex nature and dynamic communications between healthcare providers and pharmacies can become easily fractured or interrupted during emergencies and disasters, which can impact their ability to provide care and connect with patients in need. For displaced, chronically-ill patients who find themselves lacking access to critical medications, replacing and refilling a prescription can often become incredibly difficult, if not impossible, without assistance. Patients also often lack information on the specific medications they take as well as dosages.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that patient medical records and prescription history are not housed in a centralized database widely accessible to pharmacists. This challenge has compounded in the years since Hurricane Katrina, as the rate of

EHR adoption has climbed. This roadblock leads to challenges for patients to refill and replace needed prescriptions during emergency evacuations when their regular pharmacy is either closed or inaccessible. Although patients could receive medicine under emergency prescription laws, they may not know the correct medicine or dosage.



Allscripts and Surescripts Partner to Help Patients and Pharmacists During the 2017 Hurricane Season

Allscripts and Surescripts are health information technology companies providing solutions to providers, pharmacies, payers and other healthcare system stakeholders. Through horizontally and vertically connected information-sharing, Allscripts and Surescripts aim to improve healthcare through greater, more seamless connectivity.

An innovative partnership between Allscripts and Surescripts helped pave the way for providers and pharmacists to access needed prescription history in states impacted by the catastrophic hurricanes of 2017. After Hurricane Harvey hit land, Surescripts and Allscripts quickly mobilized to allow any pharmacist in affected regions – regardless of what EHR or clinical platforms they used - to access patient medication history data through a free cloud-based application. Access to this medication history allowed for pharmacists to quickly and accurately issue refills for patients impacted by the hurricanes, despite widespread power and systems outages across the region.

Surescripts and Allscripts took inspiration for their system from the **In Case of Emergency Prescription Database** (ICERx), which was created by the two companies ten years earlier in response to patient prescription access issues during Hurricane Katrina.

“The Allscripts ePrescribe team, now part of Veradigm, was proud to deliver access to key clinical technologies that pharmacists and other healthcare professionals needed to sustain patient medication therapy during horrific natural disasters, Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma.”

TOM LANGAN

Chief Executive Officer
Veradigm™(an Allscripts company)

Leveraging Allscripts’ existing ePrescribe application and Surescripts’ nationwide network that connects virtually all electronic health records (EHRs), pharmacy benefit managers, pharmacies and clinicians, plus an increasing number of health plans, long-term and post-acute care organizations and specialty pharmacy organizations, the two companies partnered to meet the specific challenges of Hurricane Harvey. The declaration of a state of emergency in Texas temporarily allowed pharmacists to dispense critical medications without a prescription. Combined with the information provided by the new system – secure access to patient medication history, potential clinical alerts, such as drug interactions, etc. – this authority helped secure quick, reliable access to lifesaving medicines for evacuees, while avoiding prescription errors.

“We think about disaster response and recovery in terms of our core mission: to get actionable intelligence into the hands of providers when it’s needed to ensure treatment and care for patients. We created a simple but powerful solution and deployed it for use by any affected pharmacist within days of Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. Now we have an ongoing solution ready, so next time we can be prepared to respond even more quickly.”

DONALD DORFMAN

Vice President and General Manager of Clinical Workflow Solutions
Veradigm

To raise awareness among large and small pharmacy chains, Allscripts and Surescripts partnered with major pharmacy benefit managers and retail pharmacy chains to deliver external and internal communication to generate awareness and reinforce the availability of the solution. Allscripts and Surescripts also worked with Healthcare Ready to amplify information to a network of public partners, including Disaster Medical Assistance Team pharmacists, as well as with the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) and National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) to make the system known to pharmacists.

Walgreens' Role as a Patient Anchor During the 2017 Hurricanes

Walgreens is a global health and well-being enterprise with pharmacy chain and pharmacy distribution services across the United States. With over 9,500 stores across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Walgreens serves over 8 million people every day and filled 1.1 billion prescriptions in fiscal year 2018. Walgreens commitment to disaster relief is demonstrated through both independent partnerships and through work with the National Association for Chain Drug Stores (NACDS).

Pharmacies proved to be a crucial anchor for the communities affected by the 2017 hurricane season. In addition to providing key healthcare services – including free telehealth visits through MDLive – Walgreens helped affected individuals and families with reliable access to basic essentials.

Amidst infrastructure destruction and dangerous conditions – including lack of gas, electricity, water and other basic essentials – Walgreens pharmacies were critical access points for resources beyond treatments and cures. People used Walgreens stores

“One of our organization’s strengths is our community outreach. Our relationships with community organizations in Puerto Rico allowed our team to address problems and bridge gaps through partnership-based solutions, such as supplying medicines to inaccessible areas to help patients affected by Hurricane Maria.”

TYLER HOUGH

Director of Business Continuity
Walgreens

to communicate with family and loved ones, withdraw cash, charge their devices and obtain food and water.

With over 100 stores on the island, Walgreens was an important anchor organization for Puerto Rico during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Ensuring access to needed healthcare services, medicines, vaccines and equipment in Puerto Rico was a unique challenge for public and private companies alike. Puerto Rico’s travel and transport barriers were exacerbated magnitudes above those of an inland area.

“Pharmacies are more than just places to pick up medicines, they are anchor institutions.”

TYLER HOUGH

Director of Business Continuity
Walgreens

Through strategic relationships with community organizations, Walgreens was able to quickly identify needs, locally source medicines and work with healthcare distributor AmerisourceBergen and other local courier services to make deliveries to remote locations and facilities. While navigating around lack of airport access to gas and power outages, Walgreens and partners went above and beyond to help provide access to healthcare for those impacted on the island.

For instance, Walgreen’s “pop-up” pharmacies brought medicines directly to evacuees located in disaster shelters. And, in addition to donating \$250,000 to Hurricane Maria relief efforts, Walgreens often waived copay and cost sharing for patients picking up their medicines at pharmacy locations on the island. Even before Hurricane Maria made landfall, Walgreens ensured plans were in place to protect the safety of its team members on the ground in Puerto Rico.

As the role of pharmacies during emergencies and disasters expands, Walgreens’ capabilities, resources and commitment to helping affected patients becomes increasingly important. Though public-private partnerships, engagement on forward-thinking policies and regulations and thoughtful engagement on existing barriers and challenges, Walgreens can help contribute further to emergency and disaster preparedness and relief efforts.