

How a cloud communications platform puts connection at the center of care



Table of contents

Introduction 3

CHAPTER 1
Scheduling 4

CHAPTER 2
The visit with the physician 6

CHAPTER 3
The payer 8

CHAPTER 4
Care coordination 10

CHAPTER 5
Point-of-care 12

CHAPTER 6
Post-op, follow-up, and billing 13

Conclusion 15

About RingCentral 15

Introduction

This is the story of how cloud communications technology provides previously impossible links between patients, providers, payers, and all aspects of a care journey. It's a story of efficient and personalized communication between and within care teams, of fail-safes against electronic data loss and other unpredictable events, of safety and compliance in data exchange, and of new workflow and personnel efficiencies that are truly driven by data.

Most importantly, this is a story of one woman's journey from pain and uncertainty to health and delight.



Scheduling



Beth and Patrick are sitting in their living room. They may be in a remote rural setting, or they may be in a city high rise. (1)

Beth's knee has been bothering her for some time. She has completed a course of physical therapy and steroid injections. She experiences some relief, but the pain always returns. It is time, Beth decides, to seek more aggressive treatment.

From her couch, she dials her provider—Rockland Orthopedics. A brief menu allows Beth to verbally ask to speak to someone. (2)

An incoming call message appears on the screen of Phil, an intake agent at the provider's contact center. Along with the call message, Beth's profile data appears on Phil's screen. Phil quickly sees that the patient's full name is Elizabeth, but her nickname, which she prefers, is Beth.

Within seconds, Phil and Beth are connected. "Is this Beth?" asks Phil. "I have your file open in front of me."

Beth is surprised and delighted that the agent already knows her preferred name and has her information in front of him. When Beth explains that her pain has returned and she would like to pursue more aggressive treatment, Phil presents Beth with a telehealth appointment options. She chooses her date.

It was a revolution that vastly increased their satisfaction with the experience of healthcare. A J.D. Power study in late 2020 found that customer satisfaction with telehealth was the highest rated service line of all service lines studied—higher than all other healthcare, insurance, and financial services studied. Kyruus came to a similar conclusion in a report published in June. They found that more than 75% of patients were "very" or "completely" satisfied with virtual care.

However, while elevating the patient experience is a major priority for all medical practices, telehealth is just a piece of a comprehensive cloud communications platform. A truly integrated cloud communications system can improve nearly every aspect of your practice operations. Let's explore what a fully integrated system can afford. In December 2020, MGMA members told us what services they plan to add in 2021. All can be facilitated and optimized by cloud communications.

Behind the Scenes



1. The consequences of where Beth and Patrick live are fading.

Where virtual care via telehealth used to be a last resort for the rural population, it is quickly becoming a **preferred option** for both the rural and urban population.



2. Interactive Voice Response

Beth's call actually went to a contact center using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology to almost immediately route the call to her provider.



The visit with the physician

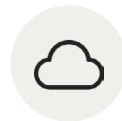
Prior to her telehealth appointment, Beth receives a couple appointment reminders via text (1).

On the day of the appointment, Beth's physician—Dr. Kwan—has a video chat with a consulting specialist. Now up to date on Beth's situation, Dr. Kwan and Beth connect via secure video chat. (2) Beth's treatment history and description of her pain convinces Dr. Kwan that surgery is the next step. Beth tells Dr. Kwan she will check her schedule and call scheduling. When she calls scheduling, Phil answers.

"Hi Beth, how did it go with Dr. Kwan?" says Phil. (3)

Beth is again surprised and delighted to be dealt with so personally and specifically. She and Phil schedule her surgery. Beth asks Phil if she should check with her insurer. Phil says, "Nope! I'll take care of that."

Behind the Scenes



1. Call and text connected via cloud to CRM or EMR

A well-integrated cloud communications system will connect via API (application programming interface) to most CRM (customer relationship management) or EMR (electronic medical record) platforms. Beth's CRM profile indicates that she prefers and has opted in to telehealth communication. Once her appointment is set, the reminders are automatically scheduled to be delivered via text, a best practice that has been repeatedly demonstrated to decrease no-shows in a wide array of care settings. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6112101/>)



2. HIPAA and HITRUST certification are a must

The security of the electronic transmission of medical data is a prime target of hackers, a prime worry of healthcare consumers, and should be of paramount concern to any medical practice. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a federal law intended to protect consumers' health information, and the Health Information Trust Alliance (HITRUST)—a foundation created by healthcare and IT professionals—seeks to help organizations realize the goals of HIPAA as efficiently as possible. To ensure your patients and your business is protected, choose a telehealth-included cloud communications platform that is HITRUST CSF certified.



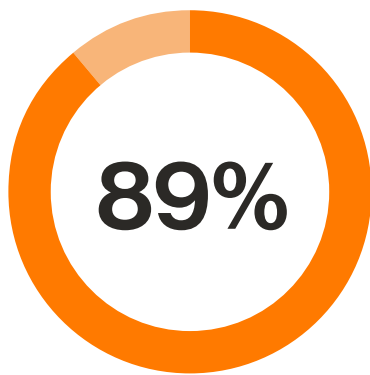
3. Intelligent call routing technology

Intelligent call routing through cloud communications evolves traditional voice-only, on-premises systems with new systems that customize inbound & outbound call management, among other features. In this story, Beth and Phil were able to connect because RingCentral's intelligent call routing knew that the agent Beth most recently spoke with—Phil—was available.

The payer

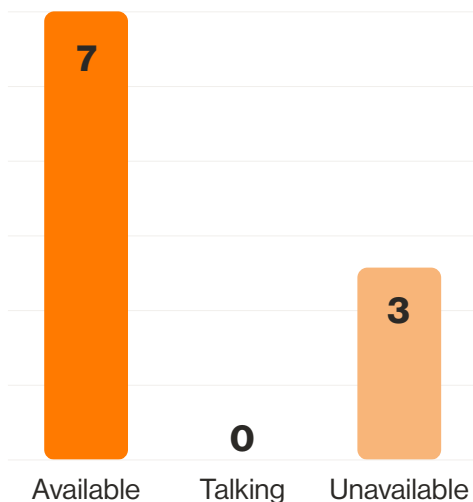
Real-time performance dashboard with robust data visualization

Service Level



Target 80% in 20 secs
Cals: 29

Agents Count



Since Beth is covered by United, Phil calls Sandra at United. Phil and Sandra speak multiple times a week. They look forward to the pleasant exchanges. Phil is convinced that Sandra is the best payer agent he has ever worked with—a true partner in patient care. (1)

“Hi Phil,” says Sandra. “What do we have today?” Phil gives Beth’s member I.D. to Sandra, and Sandra pulls up Beth’s info. She quickly sees that Beth is covered and has met the minimum pre-requisites for more aggressive care. Beth’s procedure is approved. (2)

Behind the Scenes



1. Data collection with business intelligence helps you optimize staffing

With a RingCentral integrated cloud communications system, a practice receives data on every interaction and in the aggregate, allowing you to review employee performance and make adjustments as desired. You may find, for example, that an intake coordinator is gifted at speaking on the phone with customers, another is gifted at speaking with payers, another excels at written or text communication, and so on. Assigning staff members to their areas of excellence can do wonders for retention, productivity, and patient satisfaction.



2. Robust cloud communications improves the payer-provider relationship.

Payers and providers are not adversaries. They are partners in patient care, each with a profound job. Integrated cloud communications can benefit that unique relationship similarly to the way it benefits the patient-provider relationship—by personalizing interactions, helping managers grasp unique staff strengths, improving communications routing (thereby shortening claims cycles, benefits authorizations, dispute cases, and more), and identifying high-priority or high-risk situations.

Care coordination



Prior to Beth's surgery, the care team is identified and uniquely assigned as a defined collaboration group within the cloud communications platform. This enables the team to share relevant files, assign tasks, securely message, talk, and video conference. Because the surgery center is part of a network with multiple locations, the care team is disbursed, so the shift nurse, Lisa, sends out a link and the care team gathers by video conference on the day before the surgery. (1)

During the case review, the shift nurse notices a potentially complicating allergy in Beth's case history. Via the secure collaboration group that was assigned, Lisa pings the relevant specialist. The specialist quickly rules out Beth's allergy as a complicating factor. (2)

The treatment plan is set, and all files, charts, and documents are organized and easy to access within the content shelf of the collaboration group space. The shift nurse now pings Phil who texts Beth to tell her all is well, and they are set to perform the procedure tomorrow. Phil also sends Beth her intake forms and last-minute instructions via the practice's patient portal with instructions on what she may or may not consume prior to the surgery. Beth completes her forms from the comfort of her couch and gets some rest.

Behind the Scenes



1. ePHI enables remote work

Electronic protected health information, or ePHI, is a HIPAA security rule providing for the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of patient data. In this case, Beth's team can access her information from within the collaboration group of the cloud communications platform's group space and exchange it seamlessly.



2. HIPAA-compliant group collaboration

RingCentral MVP™ makes HIPAA-compliant communication and data exchange easy and safe. Because data exchange within the group is highly secured, the extended team—including the contributions of the specialist—are more efficient.



Point-of-care

Beth arrives to the surgery center on time and confident that her patient data is in good order and her care team is fully prepared.

As Beth is situated in the surgical suite, two unforeseen events occur. An on-premises data server goes down, and a key clinician calls to say he will not be able to make it to the surgery center. Beth is not burdened with these events, the shift nurse does not break a sweat, and the procedure takes place on schedule as planned. (1 and 2)

Behind the Scenes



1. Globally dispersed, active-active data centers provide data access redundancy

Because leading cloud communications technologies make use of a network of globally dispersed, active-active data centers, physician offices, hospitals, and ambulatory care centers are no longer reliant on servers located at their facilities. This situation creates a fail-safe that allows for fewer disruptions, better schedule adherence, and safety.



2. Multiple secure channels for clinician engagement

In the event a clinician is held up as in the example above, team messaging, video, file sharing, and other tools make remote contributions highly effective.

Post-op, follow-up, and billing

After a successful surgery, Beth and her husband are given post-op instructions at the bedside, via text, and via email so they can reference their instructions in whatever channel they prefer. Beth is also prescribed short-term pain medication, and her three-month follow-up appointment is scheduled. She is sent an SMS appointment reminder and an email that syncs to her personal electronic calendar.

Beth returns home groggy but relieved and free of pain. On further review, however, the hospitalist determines that Beth needs a different medication, so the hospitalist calls the pharmacist via video chat. (1) The prescription change is made, Beth is informed and confirms via text, and the filled prescription is waiting for Beth at the pharmacy.

Later, when Beth has a question about her physical therapy instructions, she leverages her free RingCentral Video™ application to securely message her practice to schedule a telehealth session with her care navigator.

The surgery center now codes what services were performed and submits the claims to the payer. The billing center uses a VIP number to contact the payer to preemptively explain the remote contribution of the specialist. Because the specialist's contribution was non-standard, the payer agent routes the call to a more specialized agent. (2) Together, the billing agent and the payer agent walk through relevant forms and web pages to determine that the specialist's role was indeed critical and billable. (3)

Behind the Scenes



1. Risk management and institutional compliance

The surgery center's risk management program mandates that certain aspects of post-operative care be recorded via an app. Because the RingCentral cloud communications suite is designed to connect to a variety of apps, adherence to protocol is easily maintained.



2. Automatic Call Distributor

An Automatic Call Distributor (ACD) efficiently routes key client calls to pre-defined agents at the payer.



3. Chat co-browse

Through a contact center feature called "chat co-browse," provided by RingCentral, payers and providers can walk through forms and web pages together, creating both a sense of true collaboration and transparency.



Conclusion

As much as practices and the healthcare system suffered in the pandemic year of 2020, it could have been so much worse. The reasons for why the practice of medicine did not buckle under the pressure are myriad, and sacrificial heroism is at or near the top of the list.

Also near the top of the list is cloud communications—that vast network of constantly responsive electronic exchanges and servers, and the sophisticated software used to run them and to harness their power in a way humans can use. Allowing for unprecedented efficiency and flexibility in workflow processes, pinpoint accuracy in real-time and predictive analytics, and humanization and personalization for greater collaboration among the parties involved, cloud communications—exemplified by RingCentral’s healthcare solutions—allowed all of us to do our best work.

Cloud communications is the present, the recent past, and the future of collaborative healthcare.

For more information, please contact a sales representative. Visit ringcentral.com or call 855-774-2510.

RingCentral Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of AI-driven cloud business communications, contact center, video and hybrid event solutions. RingCentral empowers businesses with conversation intelligence, and unlocks rich customer and employee interactions to provide insights and improved business outcomes. With decades of expertise in reliable and secure cloud communications, RingCentral has earned the trust of millions of customers and thousands of partners worldwide. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.

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