



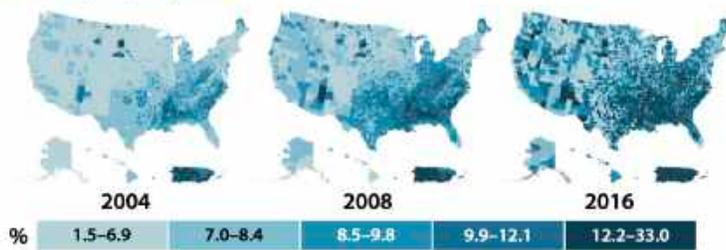
# Leveraging Virtual Care to Manage Diabetic Health Outcomes

Healthcare providers and their patients have more options for care than ever before. Telehealth options can have a significant and measurable impact on the long-term care of the diabetic population.

# The Prevalence and Impact of Diabetes in the United States

Diabetes has been considered a major health challenge since the mid-1990s, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared it had reached “epidemic proportions”. Since then, it has only continued to expand, both in terms of prevalence and impact. In fact, a report published by the CDC in 2020 indicated that approximately 13% (34.2 million) of all US adults are currently living with diabetes and 1.5 million new cases are diagnosed every year. Additionally, the percentage of people impacted increases with age, reaching as high as 26.8% among those who are 65 years or older.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 3. Age-adjusted, county-level prevalence of diagnosed diabetes among adults aged 20 years or older, United States, 2004, 2008, and 2016



Note: Data were unavailable for some US territories.  
Data source: US Diabetes Surveillance System; Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

The expanding population of diabetics poses additional challenges to an already overburdened healthcare system. In fact, in 2017 diabetes cost the U.S. healthcare system \$327 billion.

Good self-management and preventative care can be highly successful in the long-term management of diabetes but as diabetic patients age and become more prone to age-related chronic conditions, care needs can become increasingly complex. Managing multiple illnesses, and potentially multiple medication routines leaves less time and energy for prevention and self-care. This can lead to worsening health and additional complications that increase the likelihood these patients will find themselves in the emergency room.

Additionally, comorbid conditions can also have an impact on the time spent in-office with the healthcare provider. The complexity of maintaining recommended screenings, counseling, and treatment requirements often exceeds the amount of time a healthcare provider can spend with an individual patient. This can lead to providers and patients alike feeling rushed and frustrated.

**The ability to manage diabetes proactively is a critical success factor to the long-term health and wellness of patients as well as a necessity for the healthcare system as a whole.**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2020. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services; 2020.

## The Changing Healthcare Landscape: New Options in Telehealth

The challenge for many diabetic patients is simply access to the preventative care required to properly manage their diagnoses. Specifically in rural areas, access to endocrinology care may be limited or, at minimum, difficult to obtain. When left to their own devices, patients often slip into unhealthy habits that can worsen their condition including poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and use of alcohol or tobacco.

### Increasing Healthcare Value and Affordability with Technology

Telehealth solutions can be a useful tool in supporting and delivering preventative diabetes care to at-risk populations. In the past few years, it has become an increasingly popular solution with 76% of U.S. hospitals leveraging video and other technologies to connect with patients and consulting practitioners. Virtual care technology saves time and money, lowers barriers to patient engagement, and reduces emergency department and urgent care center visits. It also allows patients to receive more one-on-one time with their healthcare team and providers to offer a higher quality of care.

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**With recent changes in policy brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. telehealth market is expected to reach \$10 billion in 2020 with high double-digit YoY growth of approximately 80%. This trend towards virtual care is not expected to reverse or slow down post-COVID.**

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Additionally, patients who receive proactive outreach via telehealth services can benefit greatly from an established consistency of care. For example, patients who are enrolled in programs with consistent monthly outreach such as Chronic Care Management and Remote Patient Monitoring have consistently shown an increase in preventative care compliance and a decrease in hospitalizations.

In fact, a study conducted in 2018 on Telemedicine in the Management of Type 1 indicated that not only did patients save an average of 78 minutes in travel time, their Hemoglobin A1c levels and glucose variability also trended towards a mean decrease, and 100% of the patients said they would recommend telehealth services to others.

**As virtual care options expand past the traditional telemedicine model of the past, we should expect to see a continued improvement in long-term patient outcomes and a subsequent decrease in costs for both patients and the healthcare system as a whole.**

## Leveraging Telehealth to Better Address the Diabetic Population

Diabetes, like many other chronic illnesses, is largely influenced by lifestyle choices and habits. When patients make the right choices for their health, they can often control and even improve their illness. Inversely, when patients do not comply with prescribed care plans and recommendations their conditions can worsen resulting in unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Leveraging telehealth is an increasingly popular and viable option for diabetes management. It can improve patient experience, quality of care and outcomes while reducing healthcare spending. While initially slow to take hold in the marketplace among the aging population, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for remote care significantly.

Telehealth allows providers to reach patients in rural or underserved communities and provide them with quality care. Employing patient engagement strategies alongside technology can prove highly successful in ongoing adoption and engagement.

### Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) for Diabetes

Self-management of diabetes is heavily tied to lifestyle modifications, which can be continuously monitored on telehealth platforms. One of the easiest telehealth platforms to adopt for diabetics is remote patient monitoring. The provision of a glucometer that seamlessly connects, through cellular signal, to an RPM platform requires very little behavior change for patients when it comes to collecting their blood glucose data. This is a critical success factor for adoption.

Allowing patients to participate in device selection and guide the level of technology they interact with can also increase adoption. As an example, the Wellbox model leverages a device specialist to walk newly enrolled patients through a decision making tree that pairs them with their ideal device. This ensures patients are comfortable with their solution before they are assigned to a dedicated nurse and helps them increase their understanding and commitment to the program.



## Chronic Care Management (CCM) for Diabetes

Chronic Care Management programs work to educate and empower people living with diabetes to make the difficult but necessary lifestyle changes required to improve their health. It also provides the support required to minimize and eliminate barriers and challenges to achieving health goals while ensuring consistency of care among healthcare providers. A program built for individuals with two or more long-term health concerns, CCM is ideal for patients living with diabetes as well as a comorbid condition, such as hypertension or heart disease. The American Diabetes Association recently published a study, *Translating the Chronic Care Model Into the Community*, that concludes:

- A CCM-based intervention was effective in improving clinical, behavioral, psychological/psychosocial, and diabetes knowledge outcomes in patients with diabetes. The CCM group, which received both patient and provider education, demonstrated significantly improved A1C levels, non-HDL cholesterol levels, and rates of self-monitoring of blood glucose compared with the other study groups.
- Implementation of the Chronic Care Model has been shown to improve outcomes for diabetes by providing a system for productive interactions of a prepared proactive practice team and an informed empowered patient.

The Wellbox CCM program leverages phone conversations with registered nurses and physical care plans delivered directly to the patient via mail. All interactions are personalized to the challenges and circumstances of the individual patient.



Monthly by mail



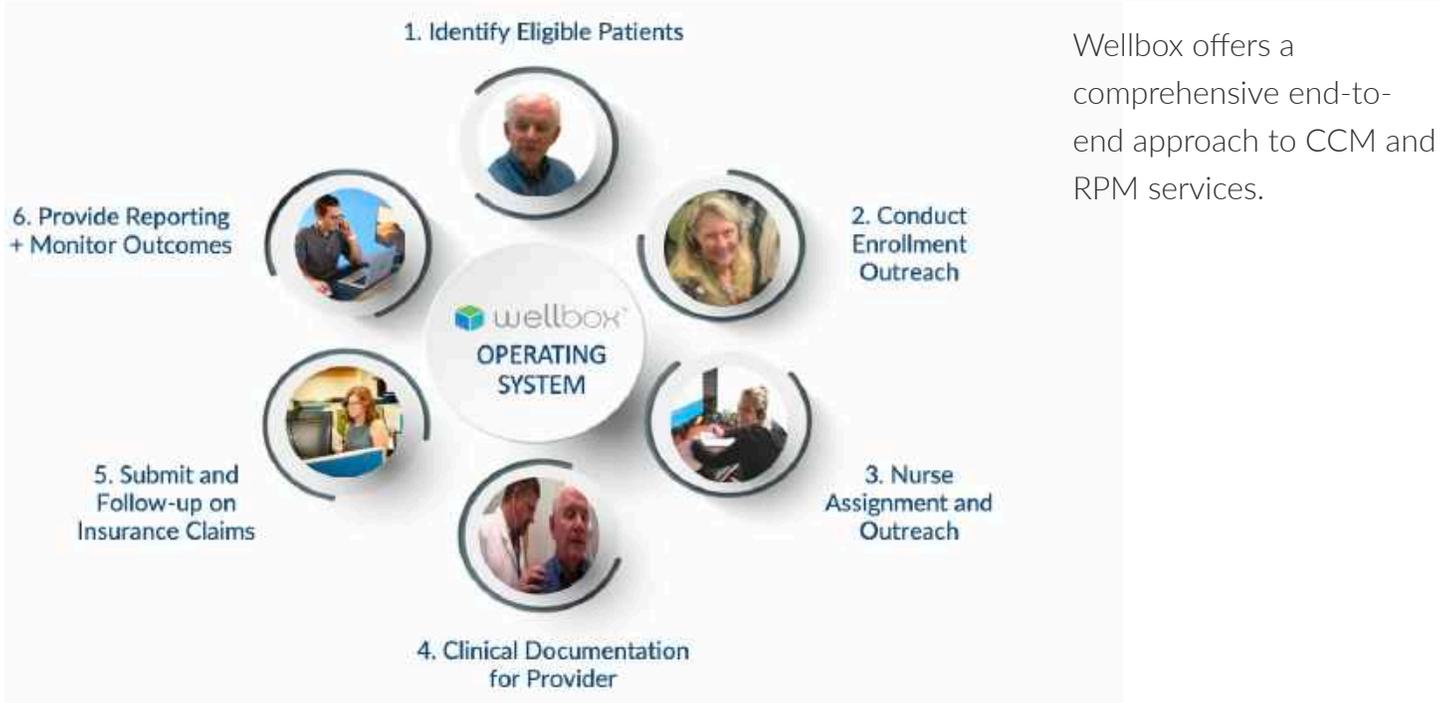
Bimonthly by phone

**A good CCM program provides patients disease and self-managemnt education, recommends appropriate preventative measures, keeps patients accountable, identifies and escalates health concerns quickly and efficiently, and drives positive outcomes.**

## The Wellbox Way

The Wellbox solution is a unique end-to-end model designed to maximize results with minimal disruption.

Wellbox takes a pragmatic approach to managing chronically ill populations, beginning with a population health assessment that identifies all eligible patients for both CCM and RPM services, including those who would benefit from both. From this assessment, a recommended approach is determined and a unique practice workflow is documented. Enrollment campaigns are conducted by an experienced team of patient outreach specialists and generally see a 25-35% enrollment rate. Enrolled patients are assigned to a team of registered nurses who perform the weekly and or monthly outreach appropriate for the program(s) that they have enrolled in. Wellbox uniquely documents all clinical encounters directly into the EHR of the practice, just as an in-office nurse would, allowing providers to view progress and intervene as needed. As a Medicare recognized provider with its own NPI, Wellbox is then able to submit all CCM and RPM claims, conduct follow-up and collect co-pays on behalf of the practice reimbursing the providers for the time they have spent working with us to improve the health of their population.



This approach, entirely unique to Wellbox, has resulted in significant improvements in clinical and financial outcomes, increased patient compliance and better performance against important quality measures.

## Driving Results

Wellbox partners with healthcare providers and systems to offer best-in-class Virtual Care Solutions to patients with chronic illnesses. Acting as an extension of the in-office staff, Wellbox provides patients with convenient access to care in between their office visits – driving increased engagement, satisfaction and clinical outcomes.

Wellbox programs consistently deliver an **effective savings of 5.6% in total claims costs.**

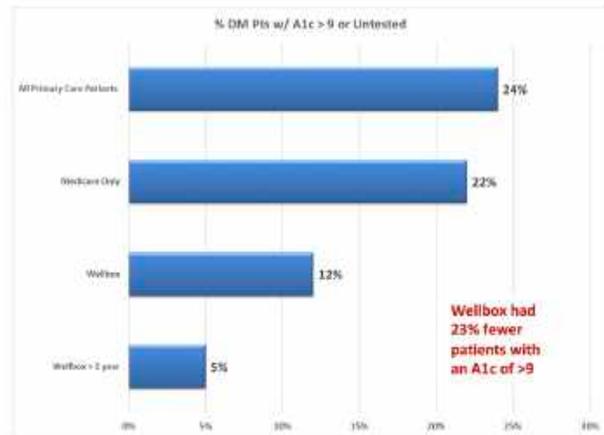
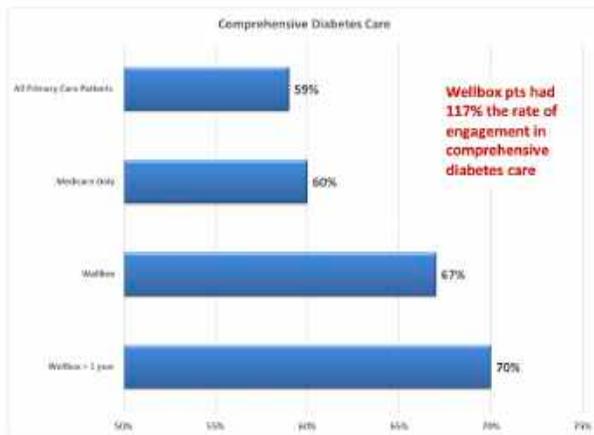
**96%** of participants are satisfied with the Wellbox program

**60%** decrease in emergency room visits and extended care stays

**50%** increase in preventative measures, such as flu shots and vaccinations

Wellbox has worked with **over 20,000 diabetic patients** in the last 5 years.

A Michigan FQHC reported that within their Wellbox population, 12% of Diabetic patients had an A1C level > 9 compared to the Diabetic patients in their full Medicare population which had an average of 21%.



## Summary

In conclusion, virtual care solutions such as Chronic Care Management and Remote Patient Monitoring, can be successfully used with diabetic populations to:

- Increase patient engagement and compliance
- Improve provider visibility into patient and population health trends
- Improve clinical and financial outcomes

Through its unique experience in this space, Wellbox is able to drive down costs, increase practice revenue and quality measure performance, improve patient experience and, ultimately, improve population health outcomes for diabetic patients.

### About Wellbox

Wellbox solutions are developed specifically to help patients living with long-term chronic conditions, a historically vulnerable and costly population, understand and manage their overall health and wellness to achieve better health outcomes.

**Contact us today for a free population health analysis**



## On a Mission to Improve Lives

Wellbox works with chronically ill patients and their healthcare providers to enable healthier, happier and longer lives while decreasing the financial burden of chronic illness to the healthcare system.

Wellbox is dedicated to making a profound, positive impact on chronic illness in America by;

- Empowering people living with chronic illnesses to be well,
- Enabling success for those caring for people with chronic illness and,
- Reducing the negative impact of chronic illness on our healthcare system.

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