

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT ADVANTAGE

# College report on telemedicine platforms

Choosing the best telemedicine platform for your practice can be challenging. Like EHRs, one size does not necessarily fit all when it comes to telemedicine platforms. What works well for one allergy practice may not be the best fit for another. When choosing a telemedicine platform, it's critical to understand your practice's goals for telehealth and the setting in which you'll be using it. Other considerations include the type of EHR you use, the purpose of telemedicine usage (i.e. new patient acquisition, follow up visits, second opinions, facilitated site visits), your comfort level with technology and new workflows, and your budget.

To assist you with this challenge, the College's Telehealth Task Force developed the Collete report on telemedicine

platforms applicable to our specialty. Rather than recommend one specific platform for members, the task force preferred to evaluate each platform against a set of eight criteria they identified. The following telemedicine platforms were reviewed for IT support, provider experience, patient experience, workflow, HIPAA compliance, technical requirements and features and costs:

- AMD Global Telemedicine
- American Well
- Chiron Health
- SnapMD
- Vidyo
- Zoom



The good news: there are a lot of good telemedicine platform options for allergists. These platforms offer a range of services, from video conferencing only, to peripheral device integration (such as stethoscope, otoscope, dermascope and general exam camera), to a one-stop shop EHR solution with video capability.

All the platforms evaluated in this report are cloud-based and HIPAA compliant. And all can operate with 3G or 4G and relatively low bandwidth through a phone, tablet, or computer, with the exception of AMD's facilitated site product. Most models offer a one-time platform fee in addition to either a licensing fee per provider or transaction fee per encounter.

See the full evaluation of each platform beginning on page 14.

Many thanks to the members of the College Telehealth Task Force who contributed to this article: Michael Blaiss, MD, FACAAI; J. Kelly Davis, BS, CMPE; Tania Elliott, MD, FACAAI; Stanley Fineman, MD, MBA, FACAAI; Yudy Persaud, MD, FACAAI; Jay Portnoy, MD, FACAAI; Jennifer Shih, MD, FACAAI; David Shulan, MD, FACAAI; and James Tracy, DO, FACAAI. A recent study by AMA researchers based on data from its 2016 Physician Practice Benchmark Survey¹ indicates that allergists are among the specialists who use telemedicine the least to interact with patients, at only 6.1%. Yet telemedicine has never been more popular with patients, and there are clear benefits for allergy practices, including expanding scope of practice, improving follow up and new uses such as home-based interventions.

For more information, read the College's Position Paper on the Use of Telemedicine for Allergists, which was published in the Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology<sup>2</sup>. Take the time to research this technology and learn how it can help both your practice and your patients.

¹ https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/digital/ which-medical-specialties-use-telemedicine-most

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Elliott T, Shih J, Dinakar C, Portnoy J, Fineman S, American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology Position Paper on the Use of Telemedicine for Allergists, *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol*, 2017; 119: 512-517

### AMD Global Telemedicine

AMD Global Telemedicine offers two kinds of products: direct-to-consumer on-demand visit capability, and facility-to-facility facilitated visits. They are the oldest and most well established platform available, with 26 years of experience in the facilitated visits industry.

#### AMD On-demand

AMD On-demand is newer and provides an end-to-end visit solution with EHR capability (scheduling, e-prescribing, secure text messaging, ICD-10 coding, billing, meaningful use and clinical documentation). Integration with existing EHRs occurs through an HL-7 integration, meaning visit information can be pushed unidirectionally into a provider's existing EHR. Typically, information is not pulled from the existing EHR into the telemedicine platform, meaning if readily available historical patient information is an important feature, this is a limitation of the AMD service.



amdtelemedicine.com/telemedicine-products/
OnDemandVisit-direct-to-consumertelehealth.html



Physician support: 24/7 and 9am-5pm support plans

**Patient support:** Patients contact health care provider and service issues are escalated to AMD support services.

**Training:** Tiered training options available for physicians/ staff involved in the telehealth program.



Provides a full clinician interface for e-prescribing, ICD 10 coding, physician entry, texting to patients and integration into workflow. Adhoc or scheduled visits can be accomplished. Cannot pull patient info from EHR into telemed platform but can send telemed visit info to EHR.



Intuitive instructions. Connect via smart phone, tablet or pc.



Provides a complete end-to-end-workflow solution from scheduled or adhoc visits through queuing of patients through an easy to use patient application that is device neutral for real time phone or video call with the clinician. The physician side uses a browser based or mobile app that follows their traditional workflow through a full EHR backing or integrating into the workflow of the organization's EHR.







Chrome, Edge, Explorer, FireFox; Safari works with a plug-in but isn't as fast



**Upfront investment:** Includes HL7 integration, provider training, etc. Contact AMD for details.

Cost per provider per month: Contact AMD for details.

**Ancillary costs:** Only for non-standard customization work, cobranding or hosting fees

**Support costs:** Typically included in cost. Contact AMD for details.

## **AMD AGNES**

AMD Agnes is the only facility-to-facility software reviewed in this guide. The solution comes with the software in addition to a virtual care kit of peripheral devices including a stethoscope, otoscope, dermascope and general exam camera.



amdtelemedicine.com/telemedicine-equipment/agnes-software.html



Physician support: 24/7 and 9am-5pm support plans

**Patient support:** N/A; this is a facility-based solution, so clinicians and support staff utilize support, not patients.

**Training:** Tiered training options available for physicians/ staff involved in the telehealth program.



Provides adhoc or scheduled visits plus complete physician mobility and the highest level clinical assessment by use of medical peripheral devices and real time video. Session data can be uploaded into the EHR.





Provides a complete end-to-end-workflow solution from scheduling, check in and presence when patient and clinician are ready. During the consult, has the ability to transfer patient data and real time medical imaging with up to 40- medical devices. Can transport post- session info into the EHR or work as a standalone EHR.







Chrome, Edge, Explorer, FireFox; Safari works with a plug-in but isn't as fast



**Up-front investment:** One-time cost for entire end-to-end solution. Contact AMD for details.

Cost per provider per month: Contact AMD for details.

**Ancillary costs:** Optional additional medical devices increase cost, but the solution is 100% customizable.

**Support costs:** First year typically included in cost. Contact AMD for details.

### American Well

American Well was founded in 2006 and offers multiple solutions, including ability to work as a telemedicine physician with their online care group, a product for individual or small group practices, and a larger scale solution for hospital systems and large practices which enables providers to see patients and have back-up support from the online care group when providers are not available.

## American Well Online Care Group (OCG)

American Well Online Care Group (OCG) employs individual physicians to provide telehealth services. OCG provides malpractice insurance, training, certification and marketing and billing, and physicians are paid a fee for each encounter. This option is good for physicians who want a side business or who want to try telehealth with OCG managing all the details.



providers.americanwell.com/online-care-group/



Physician support: Helpdesk available 24/7
Patient support: Helpdesk available 24/7

**Training:** Providers have access to video-based training as well as 1:1 training. OCG providers get additional up front training/support.



Physicians see patients via scheduled or on-demand visits using a pc, iPad or iPhone. Documentation takes place in AmWell platform.



There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc.



Patients reach providers through Amwell online platform. Physicians manage their waiting room and schedule through the app and choose on-demand or scheduled visits. Physicians can e-prescribe and document in the platform. Amwell handles payment processing.







Chrome, Edge, Explorer, Firefox and Safari



**Up-front investment:** No

**Cost per provider per month:** None; providers earn a flat per visit fee based on specialty.

Ancillary costs: No Support costs: No

### American Well Create Your Own Practice

American Well Create Your Own Practice is a small group practice model where physicians can set their price per visit and American Well takes a small transaction fee. Currently the model is cash-pay only, and physicians are required to offer two available telemedicine appointments per week to maintain an active account. Patients can access the physician through the American Well platform, and documentation is performed within American Well's documentation system. If a cobranding solution and/or integration into a provider's existing EHR and current workflow is a priority, this is a limitation of the product.



providers.americanwell.com/private-practice/



Physician support: Helpdesk available 24/7
Patient support: Helpdesk available 24/7

**Training:** Providers have access to video-based training as

well as 1:1 training.



Physicians see patients via scheduled or on-demand visits using a pc, iPad or iPhone. Documentation takes place in AmWell platform. Physicians must maintain two available telehealth appointments per week.



There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc.



XPatients reach providers through Amwell online platform. Physicians manage their waiting room and schedule through the app and choose on-demand or scheduled visits. Physicians can e-prescribe and document in the platform. Amwell handles payment processing.







Chrome, Edge, Explorer, Firefox and Safari



**Up-front investment:** No

**Cost per provider per month:** Small per transaction fee.

Ancillary costs: No
Support costs: No



### American Well Branded Platform

American Well Branded Platform is a customizable, cobranding solution for large practices and health systems that offers HL-7 integration and backup coverage through the Online Care Group. For example, Cleveland Clinic and NY Presbyterians' telemedicine platforms are powered by American Well. This is a costly option and not applicable for individual or small group practices. This is the costliest of all the available telemedicine solutions reviewed.



americanwell.com/solution-overview/



Physician support: Helpdesk available 24/7
Patient support: Helpdesk available 24/7

**Training:** Providers have access to video-based training as

well as 1:1 training.



This full-service platform can be accessed via the web or mobile device (w/ provider app). Provider can access patient's EHR health summary. Documentation takes place in Am Well platform and can be pushed to EHR if integrated. Can schedule follow-up telehealth visits.





There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc.



Offers both direct-to-consumer model and provider-to-provider model. Workflow options vary based on customization but can include full bi-directional EHR integration (for a fee).







Chrome, Edge, Explorer, Firefox and Safari



**Up-front investment:** Contact AmWell for details.

Cost per provider per month: Contact AmWell for details.

**Ancillary costs:** Contact AmWell for details. **Support costs:** Contact AmWell for details.

### Chiron Health

Chiron Health is a platform with a cobranding option and EHR integration capability. It does not offer an end-to-end solution for documentation. Currently Chiron is integrated with Athena, Carecloud, Dr Chrono, Kareo, and Greenway EHRs, with a planned integration with the Practice Fusion EHR later this year. Chiron is differentiated through a reimbursement tool that does a real-time telemedicine insurance eligibility check and displays billing codes for reimbursement to the provider. Chiron does not have billing capability, but if one of the codes is used and the claim is rejected, Chiron will reimburse up to a certain amount. Chiron was recently acquired by Medici, a secure messaging platform. Secure messaging is available through the Medici platform with a Chiron contract, however the two platforms are not yet integrated. If a standalone, end-to-end telemedicine platform with EHR capability is a priority, this would be considered a limitation of this system.



chironhealth.com



Physician support: 24/7 support Patient support: 24/7 support

**Training:** Self-guided web-based training module with videos and live training support as needed.

*Note:* Sales team was slow to respond to questions, which raises concern about responsiveness.



Chiron can integrate with several EHRs (see summary above). Documentation takes place in the EHR, so workflow is virtually the same. If not integrated, physician will interact with the Chiron platform, which is a simple interface.



There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc. Patient gets a link via email to connect to the visit at the scheduled time.



Office staff schedule the appointment for the patient in Chiron's scheduling system (unless integrated with EHR), and the patient is sent a link to connect via email. The visit will show up on the provider side of the Chiron application. If integrated, the patient's demographics and insurance information are pulled into the Chiron provider application.







Chrome, Firefox with a link, Safari with a plug-in. Sometimes blocked by hospital firewalls so should investigate.



**Up-front investment:** There is an up-front platform fee. Contact Chiron for details.

**Cost per provider per month:** There is an active provider fee of roughly \$1,000 per month for up to 100 providers.

**Ancillary costs:** There is a cost for integration with an EHR; contact Chiron for details.

Support costs: No

## SnapMD

Snap MD was founded in 2013 and provides an end-to-end telemedicine solution with EHR capability. They can accommodate solo practitioners or large group practices and pricing scales accordingly. Similar to AMD Global Telemedicine, it has EHR capability including scheduling, documentation, secure messaging and billing capability. SnapMD also enables group visits - a differentiator for this software. SnapMD can integrate with EHRs via their open application programming interface, which means EHR developers can access the SnapMD software solution and incorporate it into their existing technology. Prior EHR integrations include Athena, Allscripts and eClinical works.



snap.md



Physician support: 24/7 support Patient support: 24/7 support

**Training:** Remote training for providers/admins. Additional training provided first 90 days; on-site training optional.



Clinicians are presented with a queue of patients, separating scheduled and on-demand visits. Patient information and prior consults can be reviewed prior to fully engaging patient. Encounters can be documented directly into the platform. Can integrate with any EHR for a fee.



There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc.



SnapMD supports both scheduled and on-demand consults and leads clinicians through a logical clinical workflow. The system allows multi-tasking so a physician can document an encounter during the patient visit. At the close of the encounter the system automatically generates a postencounter report which patients can access.







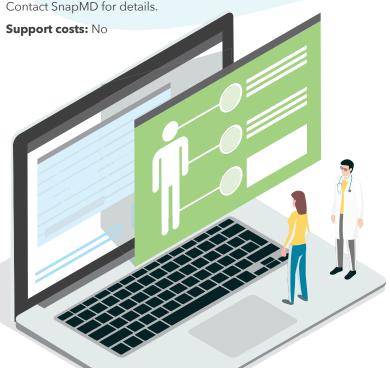
Chrome, Firefox and Safari



**Up-front investment:** Per seat fee for setup, configuration and training. Contact SnapMD for details.

**Cost per provider per month:** Per provider fee varies based on provider count. Contact SnapMD for details.

**Ancillary costs:** Additional fees for insurance verification & co-pay determination (if needed).



# Vidyo

Vidyo is a secure video platform, making it a solid solution for providers looking to document and bill within their current EHR. It is also imbedded within Epic and accessible through Epic's MyChart, in addition to other EHRs (list available from vendor upon request). Vidyo also offers a build-out capability for online, on-demand scheduling so that a patient can book and initiate a visit, for an additional fee, differentiating it from Zoom.



vidyo.com/video-conferencing-solutions/telehealth



**Physician support:** Typically 8am -5pm but can be 24/7 as needed.

**Patient support:** Not available; would need to be customized.

**Training:** Not needed for basic video conferencing; needed if building out additional capabilities such as direct-to-consumer model.



A simple link is emailed to patient with instructions to start the encounter. Provider clicks a link to initiate. Visits can be done from a smartphone, laptop or desktop. Physician documents in their own EHR.



There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc. Patient gets a link via email with instructions to start the encounter.



Vidyo is a video conferencing tool that can be used by a provider to connect with patients or other providers. Vidyo can easily imbed in EHRs (such as Epic MyChart). Vidyo can build a direct-to-consumer platform, enabling the patient to initiate an encounter, but this would be a customized solution achieved by working with partner companies.







Chrome, Firefox with a link and Safari with a plug-in.



**Up-front investment:** No

**Cost per provider per month:** Cost is \$2,000/year per license; license is per video conference, not per provider. If more than one video conference needs to be done at the same time, an additional license would be required.

**Ancillary costs:** Only if building out integration or direct-to-consumer application.

**Support costs:** No

### Zoom

Zoom has been a leader in video conferencing for businesses and recently launched a HIPPA compliant version of their software for providers. A provider can send an invite for a video visit to a patient to initiate a visit. Zoom provides secure video conferencing software only, making it a solid solution for providers looking to document and bill within their current EHR. Zoom has EHR integration capability with Epic, enabling an encounter to initiate from MyChart.



zoom.us/healthcare



**Physician support:** 24/7 support via chat or online ticket submission

**Patient support:** No direct line for patients; they can access online help center.

**Training:** Has live online training and recorded webinars.



When interfaced with EPIC, physicians can launch Zoom from an EPIC appointment. Physicians can continue to document in EPIC during a visit. With other EHRs, physicians send a link to patient to begin an appointment, and physicians document in their own EHR.



There are intuitive instructions for patients, and patients can connect via smart phone, tablet or pc. When interfaced with EPIC, patients can launch Zoom from their MyChart Patient portal.



Physician sends invite to patient and documents the visit in their EHR. If using Epic, the link to initiate the encounter is embedded in the EHR. With non-integrated EHRs, Zoom would be a separate window (like Skype for business).



Yes



Chrome, Explorer 7+, Firefox and Safari 5+



**Up-front investment:** No

**Cost per provider per month:** A minimum purchase of \$200/month is required for 10 users, each of whom could have an unlimited number of appointments.

Ancillary costs: No additional cost to integrate with EPIC.

Support costs: No





FEATURES	AMD On Demand Visit Direct to Consumer	AMD AGNES Facility to Facility	American Well Online Care Group (Independent docs employed by AW)	American Well Create Your Own Practice (Self-employed and small practices)	<b>American Well</b> Branded American Well Platform (Group Practices)	Chiron Health	SnapMD	Vidyo	Zoom
Integration with EHRs? Which ones?	Yes, list available upon NDA*	Yes, list available upon NDA*	■ No	□ No	Yes, list upon request	Yes, see platform summary	Yes, with any platform	Yes, list upon request	Yes, EPIC
Conferencing with multiple providers?	Yes upon request	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	Yes; up to six participants	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes
Clinical documentation platform?	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	□ No	✓ Yes	□ No	□ No
Billing capability? Ability to capture and process credit card payments?	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ N/A	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	✓ Yes	■ No	■ No
Available on mobile devices?	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Ability to communicate with patients from home?	<b>✓</b> Yes	Only if facilitated by nurse/provider	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes
Allow for photo sharing through secure messaging outside of a visit?	✓ Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	□ No	□ No
Allow for photo uploads during a visit?	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	✓ Yes
Have zoom-in function for photos and real-time video?	□ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	■ No	✓ Yes	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes
Provide peripheral devices (stethoscope, otoscope)?	■ No	✓ Yes - 40	<b>□</b> No	<mark></mark> No	No but can be purchased separately	<b>□</b> No	<mark></mark> No	■ No	■ No
Integrate with/connect to peripheral devices?	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	Apple Health and Samsung Health	Apple Health and Samsung Health	Apple Health	■ No	✓ Yes	■ No	■ No
Is there a scheduling function?	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	■ No
Can patients schedule their own appointments online?	✓ Yes	■ No	✓ Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	✓ Yes	■ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	■ No
Is it a closed system? (Can all functions be done through the single application?)	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>□</b> No	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	Yes, except some peripheral devices	<b>□</b> No	<b>✓</b> Yes	<mark>□</mark> No	<b>□</b> No
Text notification to physician when patient is in virtual waiting room?	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	□ No	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	Yes when integrated with EPIC
Single sign-on?	<b>✓</b> Yes	<b>✓</b> Yes	■ No	<b>□</b> No	<b>✓</b> Yes	Yes if built into EHR	<b>✓</b> Yes	Yes if built into EHR	Yes when integrated with EPIC