

# Case Study

## Partnership enables hospital to provide local access to 24-hour health care through telemedicine

**Early Adopter Partner**  
Concordia University, Nebraska

### Abstract

Located just blocks from Concordia University, Nebraska, Memorial Health Care Systems (Seward, Neb.) has a larger population of young millennials than many rural health systems. To connect with its community in ways that meet the digital access needs and preferences of the younger generation Memorial Health Care Systems partnered with Bryan Telemedicine (Lincoln, Neb.) to offer virtual health care services. The partnership was part of a “convenience campaign” that focuses on making health care more accessible through same-day clinic visits, an online portal and scheduling app, and Memorial ezVisit, the telemedicine component.

Memorial ezVisit complements the organization’s primary care services with 24/7 access to a virtual care solution for patients with non-emergent health concerns. The online tool connects patients in and around Seward with a board-certified physician employed by Bryan Telemedicine, who promptly reviews the patient’s information and provides a diagnosis via text or email. Due in part to a collaborative partnership with the local university to increase reach and impact from on-campus promotions, more than 100 people

registered for Memorial ezVisit in its first year, and the hospital reports a reduction in the percentage of emergency room visits for routine health concerns.

### Opportunity

Consumer-facing technology is pivotal in today’s rapidly changing health care industry. Its ubiquity is especially prevalent with millennials, who increasingly demand digital access to health care services and information. With Memorial Health Care Systems only minutes away from Concordia University, Nebraska, the leadership team needed a solution for students to conveniently access care. They began exploring technology-based solutions to accommodate the ways young adults prefer to interact with health care providers, ultimately leading to a partnership in 2016 with Lincoln-based Bryan Telemedicine, a division of Bryan Health. Through this partnership, the hospital now provides a 24/7 virtual care setting, which they call Memorial ezVisit.

Through Memorial ezVisit, patients access an online form to answer a series of questions derived from evidence-based

“As college students start a new school in a new community, they’re looking for urgent or quick care options. Memorial ezVisit has the power to not only break down geographical barriers to accessing quality care, but also offers convenient care anytime, anywhere.”

– Roger Reamer, CEO  
Memorial Health Care  
Systems

medicine guidelines. From there, a board-certified physician in the Bryan Telemedicine network reviews the information and provides a diagnosis electronically, along with a prescription if needed. The cost per visit is \$35. However, when patients present with complaints that cannot be diagnosed virtually, they are not charged for the ezVisit. Instead they receive assistance scheduling appointments with local providers at one of three clinics of Memorial Health Care System, keeping access to direct patient care close to home and out of the emergency room.

### **Partnership Approach**

In early 2016, leadership discussions began at Memorial Health Care Systems about how they could better serve the needs of their community, including the growing numbers of young adults at nearby Concordia University, by making health care more accessible and convenient. Through a partnership with Bryan Telemedicine, the rural health system is now able to keep health care local by providing virtual access to physicians whenever and wherever non-emergent care is needed without requiring residents to leave the Seward community, visit the emergency room for a routine health concern, or wait until normal practice hours for after-hours injuries and illnesses. To supplement this offering, Memorial Health Care Systems also now offers same-day sick visits at family practice locations and a mobile-friendly patient portal for online access to health records, test results, scheduling and more.

Leaders at Concordia University, Nebraska, in support of making health care more convenient and accessible for its student body, became early adopters of the Memorial ezVisit program in 2016. In addition to working collaboratively with health system representatives to organize on-campus promotions, medical staff at the two organizations – Memorial Health Care Systems and the Student Health Center at the university – work together closely when referrals are needed.

### **Key Steps**

- Early 2016 – Memorial Health Care Systems leadership, including Memorial Hospital CEO, board and director of marketing, meets with Bryan Telemedicine representative to discuss a virtual care opportunity.
- Summer 2016 – Memorial Health Care Systems marketing team begins promotional discussions with Concordia University and developing educational materials to distribute at Concordia University events.
- August 2016 – Memorial ezVisit officially launches as part of Memorial Health Care Systems’ convenience campaign.
- September 2016 – Promotion begins at university student events. Memorial ezVisit is promoted on campus through communications that delineate between emergency and non-emergency illnesses while explaining the types of conditions that are treatable via Memorial ezVisit.
- Ongoing – Memorial Health Care Systems continually sends staff members to Concordia University events to educate students and increase awareness of virtual care options.

## Results

In the first year, 118 patients registered with Memorial ezVisit. Hospital staff report that education on emergency health issues, which was included in the promotional efforts at the university, have led to a reduction in non-emergency hospital visits.

The partnership with Bryan Telemedicine provides a valuable service of interest to many consumers, as is further evidenced by web traffic analytics that indicate many people are clicking through to the Memorial ezVisit interface from the health system's website.

## Lessons Learned

**Continue to engage with students:** Memorial Health Care Systems sees the benefit of engaging face-to-face with students on campus in order to make more meaningful and effective connections with this growing segment of its local population. Rather than limiting promotions to the start of the school year, the goal is to engage year-round to drive awareness, increase utilization and build trusted relationships.

**Audit resources prior to new service offerings:** To ensure adequate resources for managing new care delivery channels, patient volume and consumer demands for convenient access, leadership, physicians and staff recognized the importance of internal collaboration when reviewing provider schedules, developing best practices and planning additional resources.

## Community Partners

Memorial Health Care Systems enhances the quality of life for individuals in Seward County, Neb., and surrounding communities by providing excellence in health care services in the most appropriate settings. The system comprises a 24-bed critical-access hospital with numerous inpatient and outpatient services, three primary clinics and a pharmacy.

### Early Adopter Partner

Concordia University, Nebraska is located in Seward, Neb., with a graduate school campus in nearby Lincoln. The university is a private institution of higher learning with more than 2,600 students from across the U.S.

## About Bryan Health

Bryan Health is a Nebraska-governed, nonprofit health system that cares for patients, educates tomorrow's health care providers, motivates our community with fitness and health programs, and collaborates to continually improve how we serve others.

## Contacts

**Carol A. Friesen, MPH, FHFMA**  
*VP Health System Services*  
Bryan Health

**Roger Reamer, MBA**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Memorial Health Care Systems

**Mallory Gibreal**  
*Director of Community Relations*  
Memorial Health Care Systems