WellPower

Modernizing the Telehealth Experience to Rethink Behavioral Care Delivery

The Challenge:

In light of pandemic obstacles and workforce shortages, WellPower was in need of a tool to unify patient health records, patient/provider communications, and end user appointments.

The Solution:

Within 60 days, Neudesic created a robust, immersive, and HIPAA compliant care platform for a seamless telehealth experience. The platform enable end users to manage their information (such as Electronic Health Records), communications with providers, and appointments.

The Benefits:

The quick implementation of the seamless platform enabled WellPower to grow their week over week enrollments while extending the reach of therapist to end users.
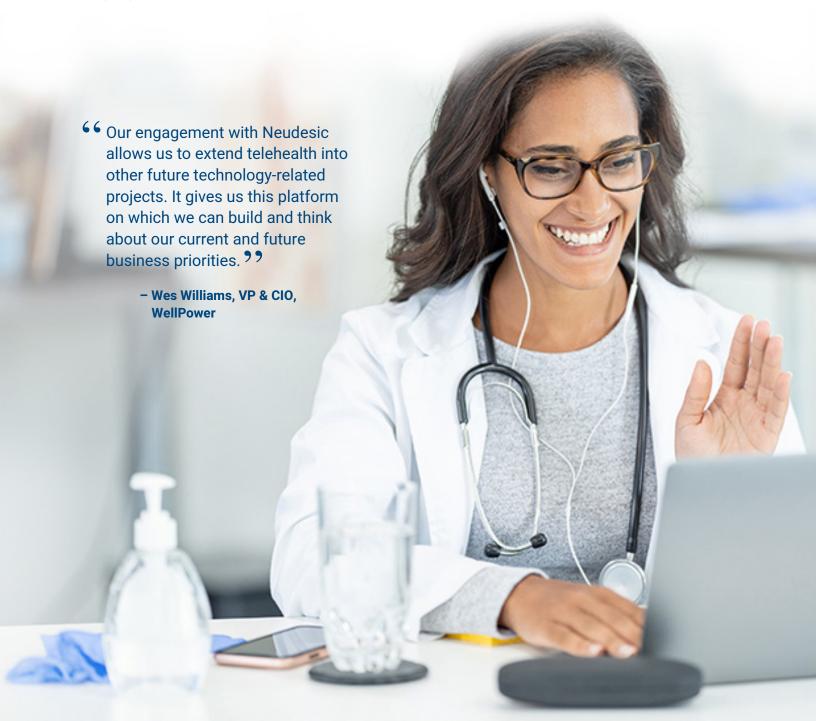
> *Ultimately, it's about patients being able to engage in care more deeply. We want to provide information to them in a safe and healthy way so that they can make decisions and be fully engaged in their care. I think that's one of the biggest ways healthcare and WellPower is changing - digital information is more readily available without patients having to go through a manual process.*

> — **Nate Hamilton, Software Engineering Manager, WellPower**

The Client

Virtual Scheduling Fatigue Impacts Enrollment

At the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, WellPower was strained to continue delivering healthcare services and bridge the gap to treatment created by COVID-19 restrictions regarding in-person services. WellPower is a nonprofit mental health center that is locally and nationally recognized for innovation in community behavioral healthcare. Their mission-driven work focuses on customized treatment, prevention, outreach, and crisis services for children, adults and families - a community the organization refers to as the "People We Serve" (PWS).

WellPower was previously using Microsoft Teams for internal communication, and turned to this as a temporary solution to establish business continuity when remote operations became essential. But as Teams was not a dedicated telehealth solution, their patients were experiencing frustration and fatigue due to the confusing instructions regarding virtual appointment scheduling and attendance, which in turn significantly impacted monthly session KPIs. A more robust tool dedicated to telehealth support was necessary to mitigate barriers to entry for their patients and to address the long term implications of how a telehealth model could thrive in a new digital-first world.

> " Our engagement with Neudesic allows us to extend telehealth into other future technology-related projects. It gives us this platform on which we can build and think about our current and future business priorities. "
>
> **– Wes Williams, VP & CIO, WellPower**

The Challenge

Challenges Arise in a New Telehealth Landscape

Historically, WellPower had been an in-person service provider with telehealth comprising only a nominal portion of their services. That telehealth model was also vastly different from today's model; an out-of-state provider would deliver services remotely to a patient who was on location at WellPower's facility. Though telehealth was always on the organization's roadmap for the future, the pandemic sparked new urgency to accelerate their plans.

"In the early days of the pandemic, it was a little wild west. Everyone was just doing their best. The Office of Civil Rights gave a notice of discretionary enforcement saying to facilitate telehealth right away," says Wes Williams, VP & CIO at WellPower. "We wanted to set ourselves up to embrace telehealth long term."

Microsoft Teams was working, but missed appointments were common as patients were frequently overlooking email invites, and a manual appointment reminder process was required. There wasn't a cohesive place for patients to locate their appointment information and then join that video meeting to receive virtual care. This multi-step process was resulting in a drop in patient engagement.

There was also a growing imbalance between available behavioral health providers and the demand for care. "We have a critical workforce shortage; there are not enough behavioral health providers out there to meet the need," Williams describes. "One in five people at any given point in time has a behavioral health disorder. But 60% of those folks never receive any help or treatment for that disorder. If you run those numbers in Denver, it's a little shy of 150,000 people with a behavioral health disorder, but 90,000 of them are not receiving any treatment. A provider like us treats more than 20,000 people each year, there's just not enough therapists to scale treatment."

Another challenge was ensuring that any tools being leveraged were developed in a mindful way that was sensitive to the needs and experiences of the users. "This is really important to us because we don't want to trigger someone who is perhaps coming through a traumatic experience as they use the app to get help. So the challenge is, how do we get information to people who can't come in because we're closed, and how do we provide that in a trauma-informed way, virtually, to people who are using our app?" Nate Hamilton, Software Engineering Manager at WellPower elaborates.

WellPower needed to extend the power of their workforce and leverage the tools to optimize patient engagement and clinical care, and automate questionnaire capture to ensure their patients could focus on their well-being between sessions and obtain faster treatment. This would also help individual behavioral healthcare providers treat more patients annually to address the pervasive lack of access to care.

An Emerging Telehealth Landscape Presents New Challenges for WellPower

- **Lack of a unified care solution:** Patients experiencing difficulties in identifying their virtual appointment information.

- **Inefficient nursing workflows:** Manually intensive and disconnected administrative practices, including documentation.

- **Workforce shortage:** Contributing to gap in access to critical behavioral healthcare.

- **Avoiding triggers:** Ensuring information is provided to patients in a trauma-informed manner.

The Solution

Creating an Engaging Telehealth Experience in Only 60 Days

WellPower was committed to Microsoft Azure as a platform as they were already leveraging Azure for data and analytics purposes, and wanted to continue using Azure Cloud Services to support their telehealth journey due to robust HIPAA compliance. Neudesic had previously successfully completed an unrelated Proof of Concept (POC) for WellPower in early 2020, and was the natural partner to build a custom, integrated telehealth experience on Azure.

Neudesic developed an immersive, HIPAA compliant coordinated care platform in just 60 days that connects the Electronic Health Record to external users. The solution allows patients to seamlessly join telehealth conference calls with their behavioral healthcare provider. Users can efficiently view, join or cancel their appointments, receive automatic appointment reminders, and electronically sign and view paperwork, medications, and profile information.

"Through Azure Services, we're able to have multiple experiences all serviced by the same core backend applications. For example, with DocuSign integration, it's crucial that patients have document signature requirements before they attend a telehealth session," says Jeffrey Clegg, General Manager, Mountain Market at Neudesic. "They can now go through those document signatures, look at their status for patient onboarding in the app and make corrections. The seamless integration with DocuSign increases engagement and compliance."

WellPower's new custom app has resulted in key benefits:

• **15% to 23% growth in enrollment within 2 weeks of rollout.**

• **Delivers a seamless telehealth experience for WellPower patients.**

• **Extends the reach of therapists.**

• **WellPower is positioned to explore additional high-value improvements for their app.**

The Benefits

Enabling the Next Evolution of Telehealth

WellPower's new telehealth app has generated its largest week-over-week increase in enrollment, from 15% to 23% growth within 2 weeks. By integrating with WellPower's existing tools, it also streamlines their technology stack to ensure process consistency, such as documentation and data entry. This enables therapists and staff to focus on delivering quality patient care rather than devoting valuable time towards administrative tasks.

"Working with Neudesic has been really special because their team has focused on building an app for our patients that's not just about displaying data. It's about 'how can we help the patients get better?' It's been a theme of the entire team as we've gone through this development process," Hamilton asserts.

The strong partnership between Neudesic and WellPower continues through high-value improvements to the app, such as in-person to video appointment conversion, which enables patients to seamlessly attend scheduled appointments they would otherwise have had to cancel. Additionally, Wellpower's telehealth app highlights their mental health portal, which provides cohesive supplemental services like setting individual wellness goals and accessing related educational content.

"It's an exciting time to be in healthcare. We had a breakthrough in terms of telehealth and people's acceptance and practice of it, "Williams concludes. "I think people are curious to try out different solutions and investigate how we can use technology to deliver, for example, specific personalized digital therapeutics to help between sessions. It's going to be an interesting couple of years."

> **"** The custom app aligns with the expected trajectory of the future of telehealth. We're looking at a permanent preference for telehealth service delivery among the PWS for outpatient therapy and psychiatry. My guess is somewhere between 60% and 70% of all outpatient services will be delivered by telehealth indefinitely. That's a huge shift, and I think that aligns with the investment we've made in having our own branded app that can help support that line of business. **"**

– Wes Williams, VP & CIO, WellPower

NEUDESIC
an IBM Company

www.neudesic.com