

ADVERTORIAL

COVID-19 | STAY SAFE

Dr. George Rapier is founder of WellMed



Fellow Americans,

It's amazing to see how people adapt. We can find a way around any obstacle. Look at how grocery stores and restaurants are dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. One week restaurants shut their doors for fear of spreading the virus. The next they were delivering groceries to customers in the parking lot. As a doctor, I am proud to see that same creative thinking change health care.

It's now possible to visit your doctor using a smartphone, tablet or computer. "It's kind of taking us back to the glory days of the house call, but virtually," explains Eric Gardner, vice president of WellMed who serves on our telemedicine team.

More people are getting the care they need online, while staying safe at home and continuing to social distance. In April, WellMed conducted almost 23,000 online visits, up from nearly 1,700 the previous month. Dr. Charles Van Duyne, associate chief medical information officer at WellMed, likens it to the Amazon approach to health care. "We're simply letting patients meet with their doctor on their terms. It's a big benefit for people."

The first benefit is less exposure to germs. This is very important if you have a serious condition that puts you at a greater risk for contracting another illness or could make your existing condition worse.

The second benefit is better access to care. Those who normally have a difficult time coming into an office can now get help. That's really important for those who are stuck at home or live outside the city.

The third benefit is comfort and convenience. There's no need to get dressed up, find a babysitter or sit in traffic to get care. Online visits let you keep up with your care — come rain or shine. "Online care is really catching on," says Visal Henderson, director of digital health for WellMed. "In a recent survey of older male patients, 77 percent said they prefer the online approach."

For those who prefer an in-person visit, health care providers like WellMed are offering curbside care. Simply wait in your car and a nurse or doctor will come to you in the parking lot.

While researchers continue to look for answers to COVID-19, health care itself is changing for the better. For WellMed, that means we're committed to providing our patients with the highest quality care while also preventing disease and illness. And we're doing it with the help of technology and a little bit of creativity.

Then there's your part in the equation. But, your job is easy. Just continue to take care of yourself, your friends and your family. Talk with your doctor about your health and what treatment options are best for you. If you're afraid of technology, there's a solution for everyone. If you can't figure it out, someone can help you. You just need to ask.

And finally, if there's anything we can learn from these long weeks of social distancing it's that we don't spend enough time with the people we love. Time is our greatest commodity. Spend it wisely. Take care of one another, especially those with the greatest needs. One day, that could be you.

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