

Exploring a whole new virtual world

How a Minnesota practice is using teledentistry to advance patient-centered care



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Megan Beuckens, DDS, is a dentistry practitioner at Ethos Dental and has been practicing for over 12 years. She is passionate about staying on the cutting edge of dental technology with a focus on esthetic dentistry. Her keen eye for detail allows Ethos Dental to provide world-class cosmetic dental services in a comfortable setting.

For Ethos Dental's Dr. Megan Beuckens and her colleagues, patient experience is at the core of their practice identity. In fact, the practice's name, Ethos, means "A way of being." When COVID-19 limited dental care in the midwestern state to emergencies only, Beuckens knew she had to find new ways to extend her skills beyond the reach of her operatory.

"It's a shock because it's what you do every day. How do you keep your patients healthy when you can't really see them? We wanted to be safe and follow all of the guidelines from the American Dental Association, the Board of Dentistry and the Centers for Disease Control," says Beuckens. "Teledentistry for me was one of the only options. Dental pain is usually acute. It's a problem that needs to be addressed soon so it doesn't turn into an infection and need further medical care."



April Kalman is an office manager at Ethos Dental. She has been helping Ethos Dental care for their patients and their smiles for over 20 years, fostering numerous patient relationships.

COMFORT THROUGH CONNECTION

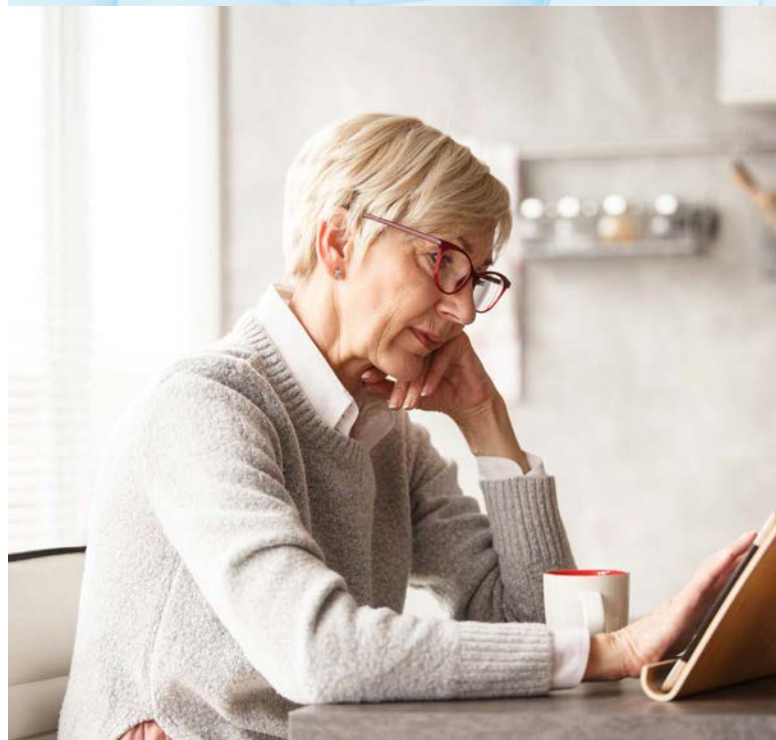
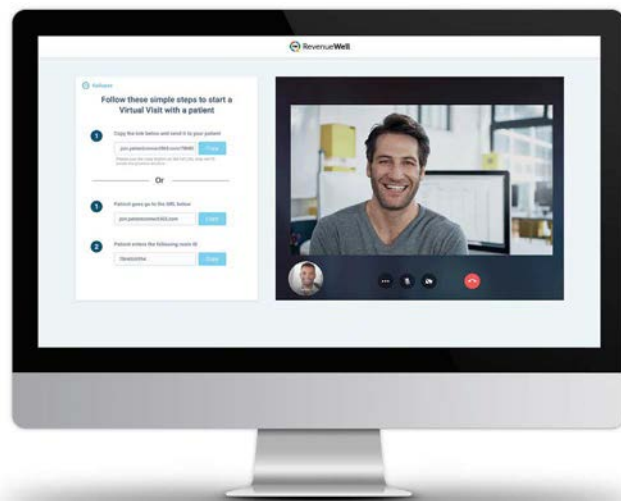
Upon receiving the news, Ethos Office Manager April Kalman canceled her vacation to Hawaii and began operating in essential services mode. She says the team had already been using RevenueWell when they began researching remote care delivery and discovered the company's latest teledentistry product, Virtual Visits.

As a dental professional serving the practice since 1998, Kalman describes the comfort longtime patients are seeking in the ability to see and talk to their dentist amidst the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. "It gives them a sense of security that we're there for them even though we can't physically be there. It also shows them that their health and well-being are still a top priority for us. People want a sense of normalcy. They may be afraid to go out and do normal things and they want to have options to seek help – and know they're still being taken care of – that we haven't just closed the doors."

Beuckens agrees and says adopting the technology immediately was a must. "The pandemic absolutely fast-tracked this technology for me. I wish I would have implemented it prior, but I've now taken this time as an opportunity to grow this portion of our practice."

GOING THE DIGITAL DISTANCE

Kalman says patients' security has always been a priority to the Richfield, Minnesota-based group practice and the Virtual Visit model is second to none in terms of triaging and advising. "It's HIPAA-compliant, safe and provides that elevated standard of care."



Kalman says the encounters, delivered remotely, suit a variety of patient needs. “I was a little bit skeptical at first and wasn’t sure if patients would be receptive, but they greatly appreciate it. It has also been really helpful for Invisalign patients with orthodontic questions. We’ve had older patients use it easily as well.”

As a dentist, Beuckens was impressed by the software’s capability for handling face-to-face sessions from start to finish. “It’s amazing what I’ve been able to get done in a virtual visit that I’ve never been able to do before.” She says the visit process seamlessly integrates into her workflow. She collects a patient’s consent, medical and dental history, pain level and chief concern. Afterward, she provides the patient with a consultation and offers next steps for pain treatment or pain management, completing her exam notes in Eaglesoft. So far, she’s pleased with the results. “Offering the service makes for a more well-rounded practice. I’ve even gained a new patient during this time, which I don’t think would have been possible before. They found us and wanted to have a virtual visit.”



Beuckens affirms the best part is it’s also easy for her patients to engage. She sends them a text message with a link to join the virtual visit, alleviating the time and headache of having to log into their email system and conduct a search. Kalman, too, suggests accessing the visits is as intuitive as it gets. “It’s a touch of a button to connect with their dentist to answer a patient’s questions. The convenience is definitely going to be key and a great feature for the future.”

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— Megan Beuckens, DDS



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THE VIRTUAL WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, Beuckens says dentists may need to change the way they see patients for a period of time. “I think we have to be very adaptive. For example, how we structure appointment scheduling. Our patients may have to call ahead and let us know when they’re here until it’s safe to resume practice. So, I do see adding the technology into our normal routine.” She adds that teledentistry may also be carving out its own niche by design. “Evaluating a tooth and having the patient show me aspects of it – it’s going to become extremely valuable. I see seniors and others who may not be very mobile, and I can see us continue using Virtual Visits in these types of cases.” She says she’ll utilize the remote platform periodically for patient check-ins rather than a phone call and possibly even meeting with specialists since it’s a fast and confidential way to carry on conversations.



Despite the unknown twists and turns dentistry may take, Beuckens says it has been incredibly heartwarming to feel supported as a dentist and small business owner by the dental community and other businesses. “It’s a really scary time for everyone in the whole world. But people have wanted to help us get back to safely working with our team, treating our patients, keeping the lines of communication open and adapting to this ever-changing environment. We’re all in this together and I think we all come out stronger once we return to practice.” For Beuckens, that’s also true Ethos. ●

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING TELEDENTISTRY

Below, Beuckens shares helpful hints for maximizing teledentistry to provide the best patient care possible.

1 USE DOUBLE VISION

“I’ve found it helpful to have a dual screen setup – Virtual Visits on one screen; patient notes, history and visit notes on the other screen. That way, I can take notes and talk to the patient at the same time.”

2 TRAIN FOR SUCCESS

“Take advantage of trainings to start implementing your technology into the practice right away. It can be hard to make changes, so everyone in your office has to be on board. Conduct team meetings to explain how it is going to help patients and staff so everyone is comfortable with using it. It absolutely does pay off in the future.”

3 INVEST IN TECH GENERALLY

“The advances in technology in the past decade have changed practices to be more patient-focused. New technology delivers a more pleasant and convenient experience for patients. In our practice, we use same-day crowns; the iTero scanner for very comfortable digital impressions; intraoral cameras to demonstrate faster what might be happening in a patient’s mouth and on their tooth; and preventative care such as lasers and wand technology for anesthesia. They come back and also refer their friends and family.”

Walk through a RevenueWell Virtual Visit and picture the benefits for your dental office.

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