

synzi

HOW VIRTUAL CARE ENHANCES  
CHRONIC CARE MANAGEMENT

# THE IMPACT OF CHRONIC CONDITIONS

A chronic disease, as defined by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, is a disease lasting three months or longer. Chronic diseases affect approximately 133 million Americans, representing more than 40% of the total population of this country. More and more people are living with not just one chronic illness, such as diabetes, heart disease or depression, but with two or more conditions. Almost a third of the population is now living with multiple chronic conditions, including COPD, CHF / CV, Diabetes, Alzheimer's, Hypertension, MI Pneumonia, Stroke and Sepsis.

According to the New England Journal of Medicine, people with chronic conditions receive only 56% of recommended preventive health care services. Yet, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that chronic disease accounts for approximately 75% of the nation's aggregate health care spending and the related treatment is responsible for 96 cents per dollar for Medicare and 83 cents per dollar for Medicaid.

The healthcare system recognizes the challenge in treating affected patients efficiently and effectively. "It's still a struggle for the health system as a whole to help people manage these conditions," said Christine Buttorff, an associate policy researcher at RAND and lead author of the study. "The issue is slowly starting to gain traction. But as the baby-boom generation ages into Medicare, it's going to become even more important."



"Chronic care management needs to be more patient-centric and should be designed to truly help the patient heal in place – in one's own home," Lee Horner, CEO of Synzi





# VIRTUAL CARE AND CHRONIC CARE MANAGEMENT

Advancing the chronic care management (CCM) of patients is critical. Implementing virtual care is a must-have for healthcare organizations seeking to improve how they manage and engage these patients from a convenient, cost-effective, and compassionate standpoint.

By enabling patient access to convenient virtual care, patients with chronic conditions are more satisfied with the flexibility in how, when, and where they interact with their providers. Plus, patients are able to have any adherence issues, such as medication reconciliation, addressed in real-time.

Healthcare organizations can actively reduce the recurring cycle of readmissions for patients with chronic diseases by enabling the exchange of essential information — such as medication reconciliation, appointment reminders, and admission decisions — and by connecting providers and chronic care patients in a more efficient and effective manner. The overall care team (which may include several providers as well as a pharmacist) can better monitor patient in real-time and collaborate to resolve emerging patient issues throughout the care continuum. Convenient, video-based virtual visits and secure messaging can help all involved manage and engage the patient. Ongoing messaging (with reminders about medication, nutrition, and exercise) help patients remain on track with their role in self-care and improve their compliance. RPM functionality and regular assessments help providers better monitor patients' condition and progress. As the number of Americans with chronic diseases is estimated to continue, a virtual care communication platform is mission-critical for healthcare organizations to incorporate in their care delivery models. Virtual care enables home health agencies to provide superior care to patients needing CCM whom other agencies might not be able to best address.

# HOW VIRTUAL CARE HELPS COPD PATIENTS RECOVER POST-HOSPITALIZATION

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) refers to a group of diseases that cause airflow blockage and breathing-related problems according to the [CDC](#). The disease translates to a high cost burden for individuals with COPD, their caregivers, and overall healthcare system:

- Costs attributable to having COPD were \$32.1 billion in 2010 with a projected increase to \$49.0 billion by 2020.
- In 2010, total COPD-related absenteeism costs were \$3.9 billion with an estimated 16.4 million days of work lost.
- Hospitalizations resulting from exacerbations in COPD account for nearly two-thirds of the total COPD healthcare costs; 1 in 5 patients with AECOPD are readmitted within 30 days of discharge.

In April 2019, UAB's Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Medicine published a [study](#) on how virtual care can help patients with COPD post-discharge and reduce the risk of costly rehospitalizations. Surya P. Bhatt, MD, an associate professor at UAB, and his colleagues enrolled selected patients that had been hospitalized for an acute exacerbation of COPD in a 12-week, 36-session virtual care pulmonary rehabilitation program.

Patients were prescribed an exercise routine by an exercise physiologist; the virtual care sessions included breathing and stretching exercises, followed by 20 minutes of aerobic exercises. As a result, the virtual care program cut 30-day all-cause readmissions by roughly 200 percent during their study, reducing the rate from 18.1 percent to 6.2 percent.

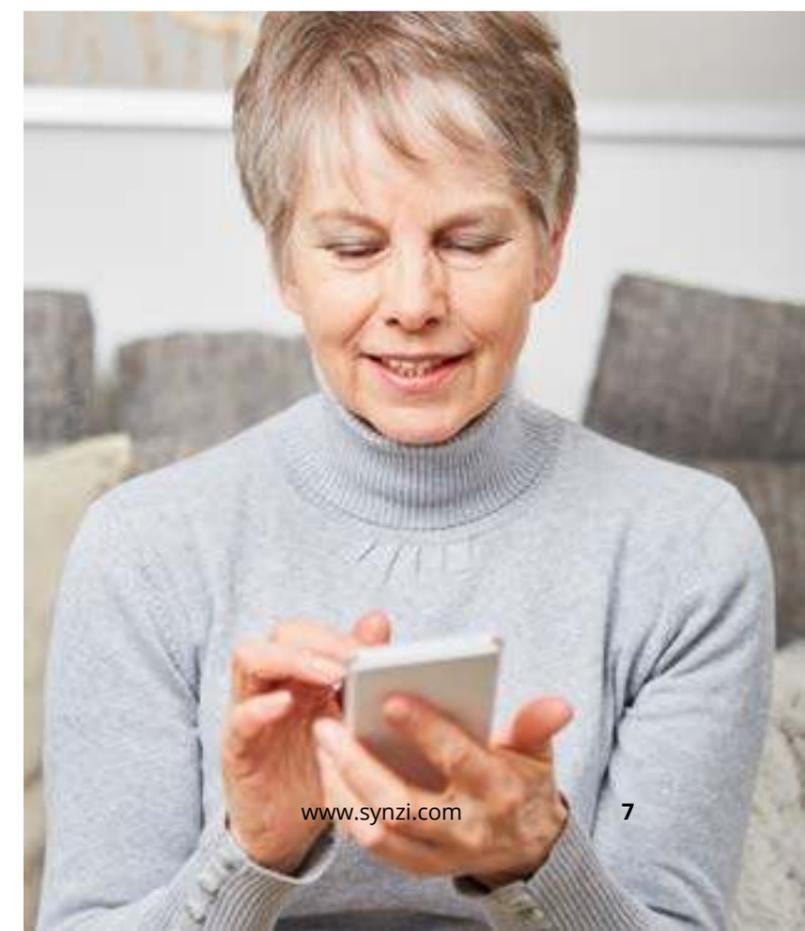
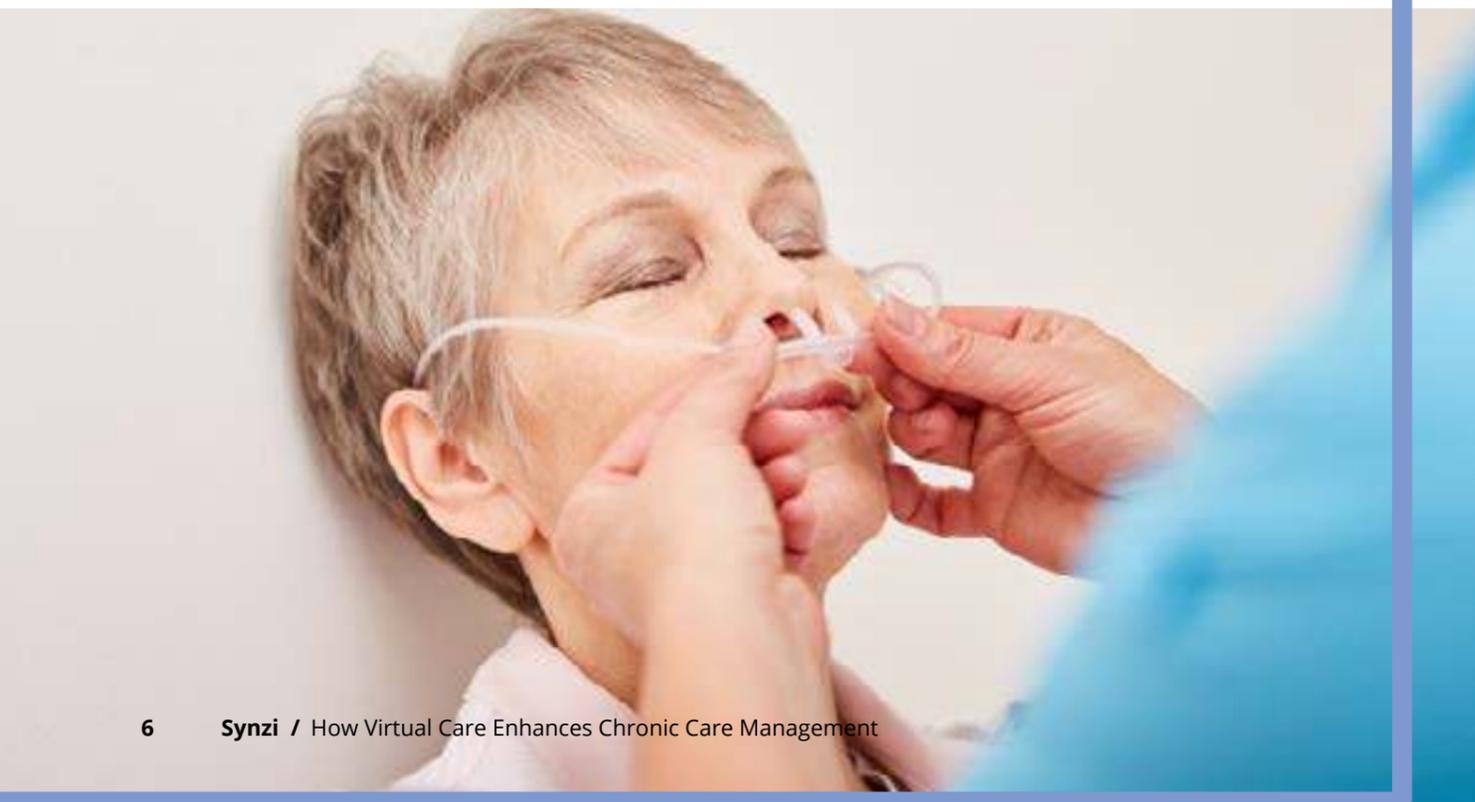
COPD makes breathing difficult for the almost 16 million Americans who have this disease and home health agencies play a critical role in supporting these patients who have recently been discharged from a hospital following treatment for this disease. Education, compliance, and stabilization are just some of the goals for home health clinicians when caring for patients with COPD. With the use of a virtual care communication platform such as Synzi, home health clinicians can conduct virtual visits and schedule a series of ongoing communications via email, text or secure message to:

- Provide education and motivation for medication compliance
- Guide at-home exercises with tips and feedback
- Enable patients to ask questions in real-time
- Share diet and lifestyle guidance on a regular basis

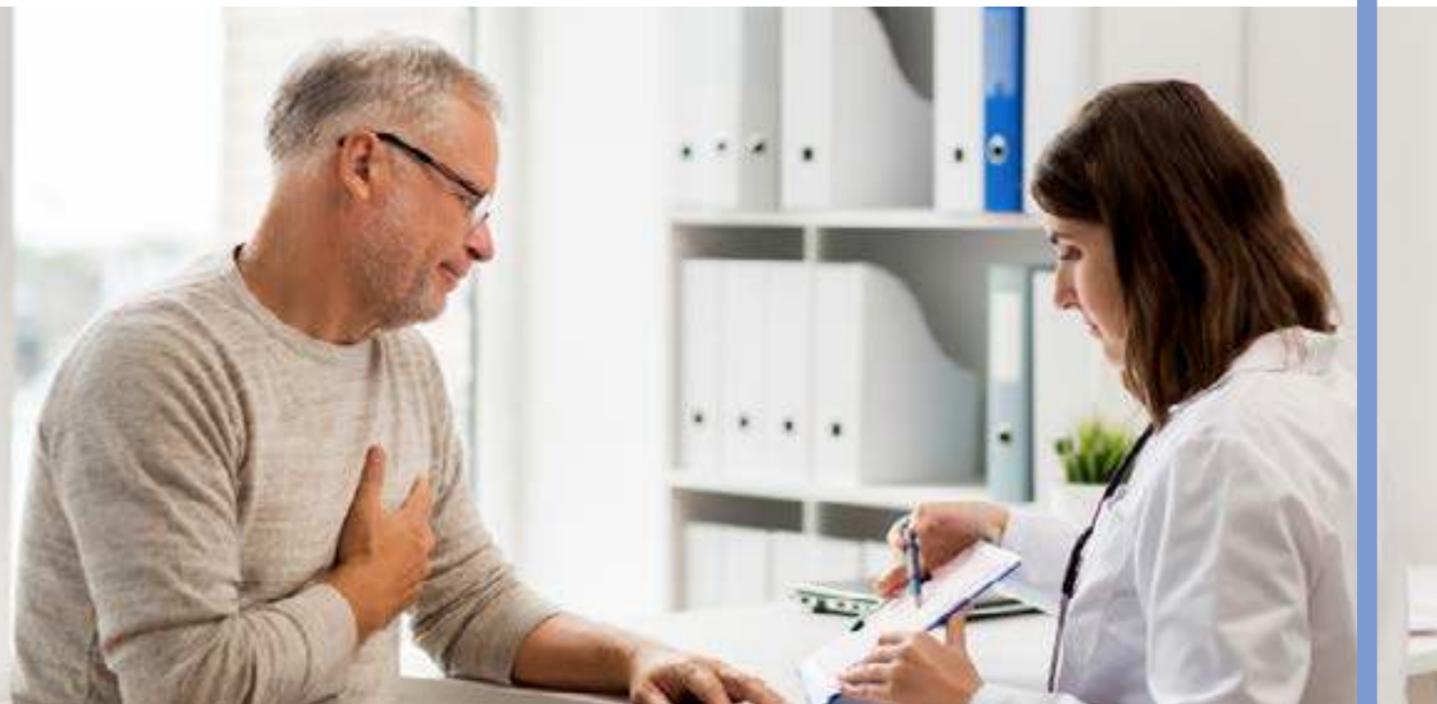
Synzi's remote patient monitoring solution enables patients to easily share their vital signs with clinicians and referral partners (such as the patient's primary care physician). Administrators can also create, send, and conduct patient assessments on a regular basis. With the platform, the home health agency administrator can also review each patient's level of interaction in the communication program.

Based on the data, the compliance messaging can be adjusted to better reach and resonate with the patient if needed. And, home health clinicians can determine if the patient's condition is deteriorating and conduct interventions when necessary.

Using a combination of video-based virtual visits and ongoing communications, Synzi's virtual care platform can help a home health agency reduce the number and length of hospital stays for a patient with COPD, reduce the risk of complications, and stabilize the patient while improving his/her quality of life.



# HOW VIRTUAL CARE HELPS MANAGE PATIENTS' HEART HEALTH



Focusing on heart health is critical; according to the AHA, nearly 80% of cardiac events can be [prevented](#). Outpatient disease management is essential for patients with heart disease as 83% of patients are hospitalized at least once and 43% are hospitalized at least four times. People with poor cardiovascular health are also at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

One of the most critical and challenging issues for the healthcare ecosystem is to find innovative approaches to reduce the high hospital admission and readmission rates of these patients – especially those affected by congestive heart failure (CHF). Heart failure is a common clinical syndrome associated with high morbidity and mortality. It is a significant public health problem, with a prevalence of over 5.8 million people affected in the US according to the CDC. The prevalence is high and increasing; the number of patients is expected to rise to 8.5 million by 2030. . Patient care costs the nation an estimated \$30.7 billion each year, including the cost of health care services, medications to treat heart failure, and missed days of work. Controlling the frequency and/or severity of rehospitalizations is critical to maximizing the quality of life for the patient while managing the costs of care.

Following discharge, home health agencies can use a virtual care communication platform such as Synzi to address and engage CHF patients. Using Synzi, home health clinicians can easily communicate heart-healthy behaviors to their patients. Video-based virtual visits enable agency clinicians to:

- Review the patient's condition
- Address patient's barriers and issues to lifestyle changes
- Reconcile medications with prescribers and pharmacists in real-time

A series of heart-health messaging also helps:

- Educate patients on how to manage high blood pressure and high cholesterol
- Remind patients how to make heart-healthy eating changes
- Encourage patients to stay active

Synzi's end-to-end solution also helps agencies monitor patients' oxygen levels, blood pressure, and day-to-day health with assessments and remote patient monitoring. These features help agencies explore if the plan of care needs to be changed prior to the next interaction and/or facilitate real-time interventions to help prevent adverse outcomes.

By maintaining frequent contact with these patients, home health clinicians can adjust patient care as needed and quickly intervene if the patient's situation needs immediate intervention. Better management and engagement of these patients will help agencies minimize the number and length of hospital stays, leading to improvements in quality of life and cost of care.

Patients value the ongoing support provided in the cadence of touchpoints. Family caregivers value the ability to receive real-time guidance and support from home health staff which deepens their confidence in being able to provide their loved one with optimal care. And, both patients and caregivers appreciate the convenience of being able to immediately access their home health clinicians for critical health-related needs and/or quick questions regarding heart health.



# HOW VIRTUAL CARE ENHANCES DIABETES MANAGEMENT

According to the [American Diabetes Association](#), 34.2 million Americans (10.5% of the population) had diabetes in 2018. The ADA reports that 1.5 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes every year. The percentage of Americans age 65 and older is 26.8%, or 14.3 million seniors (diagnosed and undiagnosed).

Patients with prediabetes or diabetes need to be educated and actively monitored in order to decrease the chances of their condition worsening and reduce the risk of preventable rehospitalizations. Home health agencies play a pivotal role in treating patients with diabetes and helping to reduce readmission rates by providing patients with education, self-management, and motivational support. With a virtual care communication platform such as Synzi, home health clinicians are helping patients with diabetes receive the ongoing support they need to manage their condition and minimize the risk of readmission.

Using video technology, patients can participate in virtual visits and understand how to sustain behavioral changes as they confront challenges due to aging, lifestyle changes, and progression of the disease process. Virtual visits are also invaluable to improving communication amongst home health agency staff, patients, family caregivers, and the patients' providers such as endocrinologists or PCPs. Pharmacists and other providers can also be included in the virtual visits if medication reconciliation is needed and/or if the patient presents with an emerging issue that needs immediate intervention.

Post-acute care organizations also use the Synzi virtual care platform to schedule and send frequent messages to remind patients to monitor their blood sugar levels and adhere to medication, diet, exercise, and lifestyle guidance. Messaging related to meal planning, exercise reminders, etc. can be pushed to patients on a regular basis.



“Aspire embraced Synzi to support our goal of providing our patients with the best in-home health care and therapy services. Unlike other agencies in our region, Aspire is also committed to helping care for the diabetic patient population and Synzi’s unique platform enables us to conduct daily touchpoints,” Kris Carter, CEO & Owner, Aspire Home Health & Hospice

Home health agencies are helping reduce the risk of hospitalization for this patient population by using virtual care to collect and analyze individual patient data in-between in-person visits. The remote patient monitoring feature helps agencies obtain and review vital signs such as blood sugar levels and weight in order to better monitor at-risk patients and reduce ER visits and rehospitalizations. And, patient assessments can be created and conducted to provide insight into the patient's progress. The patient's engagement level and healthcare data can be easily shared with the referring physician to align on the overall care plan. Clinicians can gain insight into the patient's progress in between visits and explore if the plan of care may need to be changed or if the patient's change in condition necessitates a more immediate intervention.

Home health agencies are using Synzi's virtual care platform to enable better diabetes management by deploying impactful touchpoints which prevent unnecessary and costly rehospitalizations while improving the quality of life for this patient population.





# HOW VIRTUAL CARE ADVANCES THE TREATMENT OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

## CARING FOR THE PATIENT

The [International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry](#) highlighted that the use of telehealth could help not only by making earlier diagnosis, monitoring even who lives in remote places, but also by following them up through the development of the disease, giving support to them and their caregivers, and thus improving their quality of life.

Receiving convenient access to AD care is beneficial for patients who live in rural areas, patients who are unable to travel to a specialist's location, and patients who have multiple chronic conditions and co-morbidities. As noted in the Journal, virtual visits can have significant impact in the delivery of timely, quality care to these patients across the continuum of care:

- For patients who live in rural and/or underserved areas, virtual consults can help with remote diagnosing.
- As AD patients are typically cared for in the home setting, moving an AD patient to an unfamiliar place such as a medical office or a new setting may trigger extreme anxiety and distress, and could potentially cause physical harm. Virtual visits can help the patient remain at home while also facilitating the ongoing monitoring of the patient's mental function and evolving the care accordingly.
- For patients who face limitations in accessing medical care or suffer from rare medical disorders which makes travel a challenge, the use of telehealth enables specialists to extend their reach and support into other communities.
- As it is critical that the broader care team remains informed about the patient's condition, virtual check-ins can drive better care coordination while also providing on-demand learning opportunities for home health care nurses and personal care aides who are routinely caring for the patient.

## SUPPORTING THE CAREGIVER

Given the responsibility of caring for a loved one with AD, family caregivers encounter physical and emotional stress which can negatively impact their own well-being.

“Effective care can be delivered through telehealth and offers the advantage of being often more convenient for busy caregivers,” Katherine L. Possin, PhD, associate professor of neurology in the Memory and Aging Center at the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, told [Healio Primary Care](#). “This is especially important in dementia because families may live a long distance from dementia specialists, or the patient with dementia may have difficulty traveling to provider appointments due to their disease.”

With Synzi, caregivers can conveniently access the home health care team on-demand and feel less isolated and anxious regarding their physical exhaustion, fears and frustrations in providing their loved ones with the optimal care. Home health agencies can use Synzi’s HIPAA-compliant messaging and video to [coach the caregiver](#) on a regular basis, deliver compassionate care to the patient during virtual visits, and also provide timely direction and guidance as the patient’s situation changes.

Patients’ out-of-town family members can also be included in the virtual visits with the home health nurse and specialists. These virtual visits allow remote family to become more involved in their loved ones’ care while alleviating the guilt often associated with not living close enough to provide hands-on support. With virtual care, home health agencies can provide reassurance, counseling, and comfort to improve the caregiver’s confidence, skillset, and quality of life.



“Effective care can be delivered through telehealth and offers the advantage of being often more convenient for busy caregivers,” Katherine L. Possin, PhD, associate professor of neurology in the Memory and Aging Center at the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences.



# HOW RPM HELPS MANAGE CHRONIC CARE PATIENTS AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES

## WHY RPM IS IMPORTANT

Remote patient monitoring (RPM) uses [digital technologies](#) to collect medical and other health data from patients and securely transmit that information to home health clinicians and physicians different location for review and recommendations. RPM tools:

- Monitor a wide range of health data such as vital signs, weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, blood oxygen levels, heart rate, and electrocardiograms
- Allow a provider to continue tracking healthcare data for a patient after being released to one's home or a nursing facility; Enable the provider to monitor this patients remotely and quickly act on the data received
- Improve a patient's quality of life by keeping one at home longer while reducing the number of ER visits, readmissions, and length of stay in a hospital or care setting

For medical practices, RPM helps physicians monitor their patients regularly and intervene on a timely basis, reducing operational costs while increasing practice revenue and optimizing outcomes.

Messaging related to meal planning, exercise reminders, etc. can be pushed to patients on a regular basis.

## LIMITATIONS OF MANY RPM TECHNOLOGIES

Existing legacy remote patient monitoring (RPM) or remote care management (RCM) equipment may [limit](#) home agencies' ability to engage patients in any channel and device of the patient's choice. Agencies may also be incurring additional costs and facing unnecessary risks (especially during a pandemic) when:

- Transporting a device to the patient's home
- Being at the patient's home to set-up the device and initially train the patient/caregiver
- Updating (or replacing) the device when it is damaged, dated, or obsolete
- Retrieving the device when it is no longer needed
- Storing the device until it is needed in the field

## SYNZI'S INNOVATIVE RPM

With Synzi's [RPM](#) feature, post-acute care organizations can leverage patients' everyday devices (such as smartphones, tablets, and PCs) while easily and securely obtaining patient data on key measures. Synzi's complete HIPAA-compliant [platform](#) also includes video-based virtual visits, secure messaging, condition management, and assessments in order to:

- Monitor at-risk patients and reduce ER visits and rehospitalizations
- Improve understanding of the patient's condition among the organization, the patient, and the broader care team (including the referring physician)
- Increase patient engagement and adherence

As a result, agencies gain additional insight into the patient's progress and explore if the plan of care may need to be changed prior to the next visit, identify if an immediate intervention is needed, compare results across patient populations, and keep referring physicians engaged with patient updates.



# HOW ASSESSMENTS PROVIDE INSIGHT IN-BETWEEN VISITS

## WHY ASSESSMENTS ARE IMPORTANT

To best manage patient care, home health agencies can use digital assessments to understand patient populations and identify high-risk individuals throughout the episode of care. By sending assessments in between in-person and virtual visits, agency administrations can:

- Learn more about the patient and his/her home environment, especially if the patient is refusing or postponing care amid the pandemic
- Understand the social and emotional well-being of the patient, especially if the patient is living alone and unable to receive visits from family members and friends
- Assess medication compliance, especially if a patient is unable to manage one's condition and has recently been transferred from a care setting

## HOW TO CONDUCT ASSESSMENTS WITH VIRTUAL CARE

With Synzi's virtual care platform, agencies can schedule and conduct patient assessments on a regular basis. Administrators can create and customize the [assessments](#) to reflect their clinical pathways and easily assign assessments to patients directly from the patient's profile. The assessments can also query patient satisfaction with their care and feedback on the use of virtual visits and condition-specific messaging to augment the traditional in-person visits. A range of questions types (e.g., single choice, multiple choice, yes/no, rating, and text entry) also enables agencies to use the most appropriate survey design to obtain critical patient data.

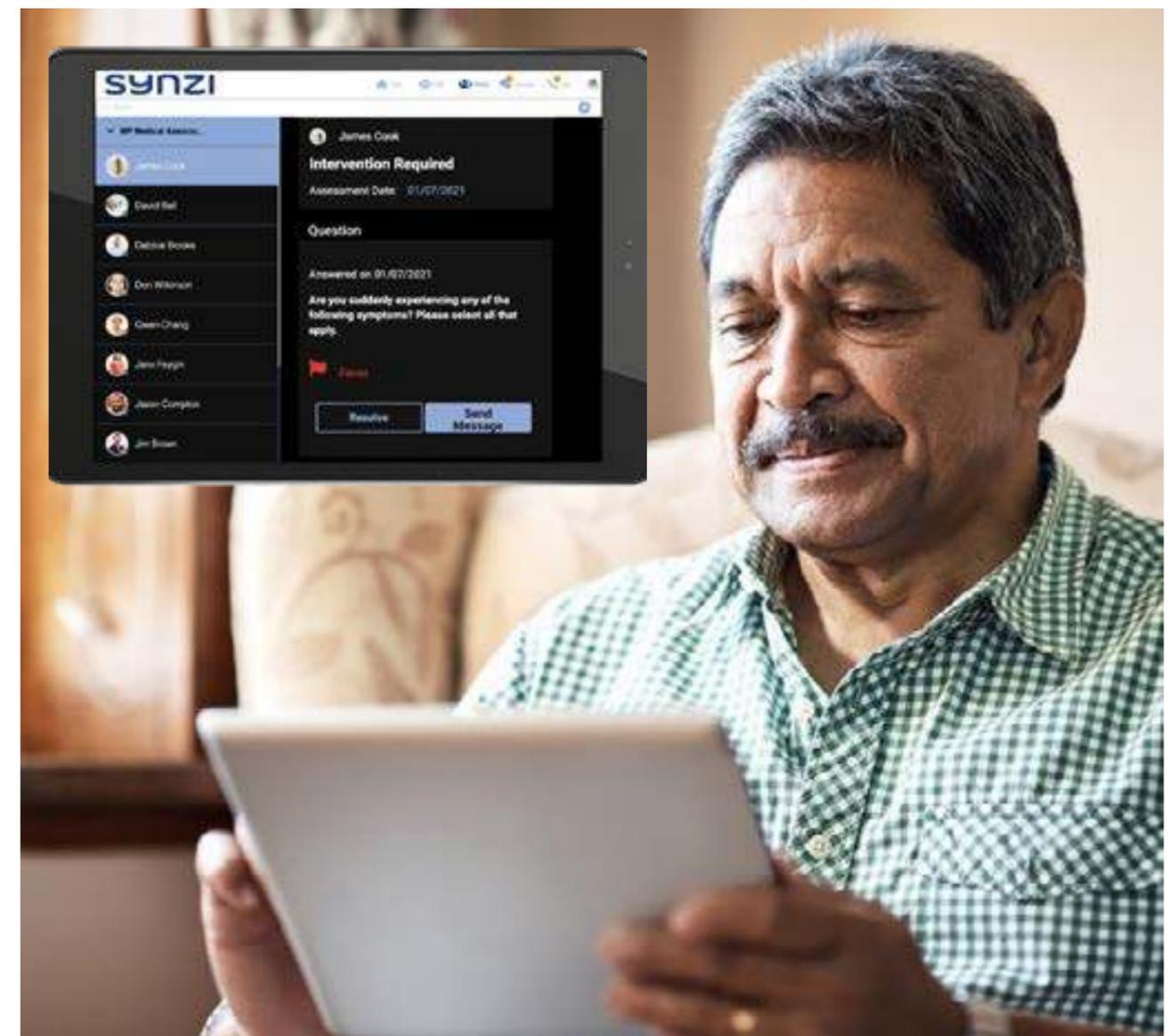
As a result, agencies can:

- Gain insight into the patient's progress and explore if the plan of care may need to be changed prior to the next visit
- Recognize if the patient's condition begins to worsen and if an immediate intervention is needed
- Compare results across patient populations and identify opportunities to improve their delivery of care
- Keep referring physicians engaged with patient updates and improve the communication stream

## HOW ASSESSMENTS CAN IMPROVE OVERALL OUTCOMES

Assessments are extremely valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic. With Synzi, agencies can ask patients to self-report symptoms and situations which may mean they are potentially at-risk. Based on the assessment's results, a clinician can determine the next steps to managing the patient's care and whether or not further testing may be needed for the patient and his/her family.

The interactive aspect of Synzi's communication platform provides the patient with multiple opportunities to share patient progress as well as raise any potential concerns with the care prior to the patient completing the HCAHPS survey. Synzi's virtual care platform enables proactive assessments – helping agencies achieve better outcomes for their patients, higher [survey scores](#), and greater referrals vs. competitors.



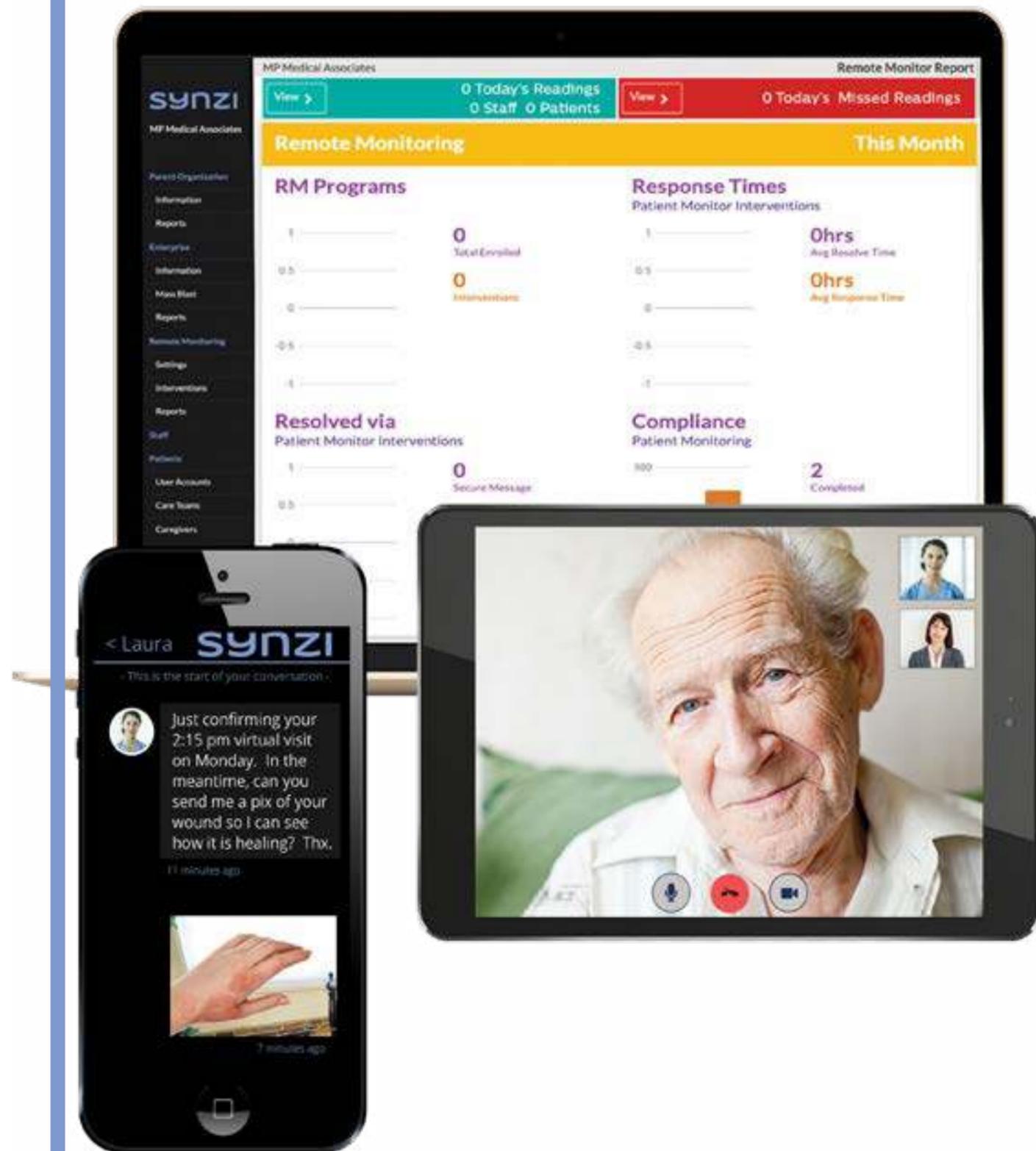
# DELIVERING LEADING EDGE CARE IN CCM

Chronic care is a key area for investment. Jason Krantz, CEO of Definitive Healthcare, shared that aging baby boomers “fall within the very age demographic most frequently suffering from chronic disease states and conditions, like Alzheimer’s, cardiac diseases, COPD, and diabetes.” Almost three-fourths (73%) of agencies [surveyed](#) by Definitive Healthcare plan to either expand upon or initially offer specialized care services, with an emphasis on the care or treatment of specific chronic diseases or conditions.

Virtual care technology enables patients with chronic conditions to access care at their convenience, putting them in control of their care. As Dr. Shafiq Rab [shared](#), “We are seeing a paradigm shift in medicine that is revolutionizing the way medical care is provided. The shift is a change in the control of healthcare. It’s moving from hospitals and physicians into the hands of the patients. The delivery of healthcare is moving from large buildings and big offices into patients’ homes and mobile devices.”

Synzi’s virtual care platform enables home health agencies to expand their service lines, grow their census, and improve patient care for those most at-risk for rehospitalizations.

“As healthcare moves from ‘point-of-care’ to ‘point-of-connection,’ the role of virtual care is becoming critical to chronic care management. Going forward, virtual care will continue to be demanded by patients and caregivers as a means to receive timely clinical support and condition management,” Lee Horner, CEO, Synzi



Technology is advancing, impacting the way we live and presenting new opportunities to improve the delivery of healthcare. Synzi leverages these innovations every day, developing state-of-the-art solutions that make it possible for healthcare professionals to do what they do, only better. We enable better performance for healthcare organizations, better access for patients, and better outcomes for all. Our goal is to continuously improve our platform and future-proof offerings that simplify complexity and inspire positive change among healthcare professionals and in the lives of patients.