



# Boosting Patient Activation in Older Adults with Digital Healthcare Technology

By MedBridge

# Overview

The healthcare industry is currently undergoing a seismic shift, integrating hybrid digital patient care solutions to keep up with increasing regulatory and market demands. But even as the progress of innovative new digital models marches toward the future, one of the fastest growing patient populations is at risk of being left behind—older adults. However, research shows that not only are older adults willing to engage with digital care, it can lead to impressive improvements in patient activation.

**This eBook will dive into:**

- 1 Why older adults are being excluded from the digital healthcare revolution and how to fix this trend
- 2 The ways older adults are embracing and benefiting from digital care solutions
- 3 How MedBridge helped one organization improve activation with digital patient care and remote therapeutic monitoring

# Table of Contents

- Introduction..... 3
- Are Older Adults Being Left Behind in the Digital Healthcare Revolution?..... 4
- How Digital Patient Care and RTM Improves Patient Activation in Older Adults ..... 6
- Best Practices for Engaging Older Adults in Digital Care ..... 9
- How MedBridge Can Help..... 10
- Conclusion..... 11



## Introduction

With digital patient care technologies like telehealth, digital HEP, and remote therapeutic monitoring surging in popularity, the healthcare industry is currently undergoing a digital revolution. But even as adoption increases industry-wide, there's one cohort that is in danger of being left behind—older adults. That's because of a harmful yet prevalent stereotype that older adults aren't interested in or capable of participating in digital care due to an inability to effectively interact with technology.

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people aged 65 and older in the United States has grown from 35 million in 2000 to approximately 55 million in 2020. People aged 65 and older are also statistically living longer, and with the younger cohort of Baby Boomers becoming Medicare eligible, Medicare spending is expected to more than double over the next decade due to increased enrollment and health care costs. As a result, digital care will become even more important as a tool for managing this older patient population and ensuring proper access to care.<sup>1</sup> But if older adults aren't even being offered digital care, providers will struggle to keep up with this increased demand.

One of the most popular ways for providers to engage patients with digital care is through the use of remote therapeutic monitoring (RTM). For providers utilizing RTM to boost patient engagement and open additional revenue streams, it will be vital to the long-term success of the program that older adults are included in the digital boom. While RTM is effective as an engagement tool across all patient populations, the growing numbers of Medicare recipients in this population will primarily qualify for billing under RTM.

### Digital Patient Care Technology Utilization

According to internal MedBridge data, in a sample of 534,236 patients served in the 60 to 69 age range, **only 20 percent** (106,847) **were offered a digital program.**

That means that a majority of that patient group weren't even given the option to experience the benefits that digital programs can offer. And if these trends continue, the problem will only become more significant as the population of older adults in the U.S. grows.



## Are Older Adults Being Left Behind in the Digital Healthcare Revolution?

The Silent Generation, those born between 1928 and 1945, and Baby Boomers, those born in the period roughly between 1946 and 1964, have an outdated reputation of being incapable of grasping the technological advances that have defined the past 25 years. According to a research study by Nielsen Norman Group,<sup>2</sup> “Digital products still discriminate against seniors. Content written for and by older people is difficult to find—and when this content is available, it often treats seniors as a niche interest group rather than a diverse and growing demographic.”

But older adults are more capable of using technology than many people give them credit for. And if you look at the wide age range of 57-75 for Baby Boomers, you’ll see a huge diversity of experience with technology. After all, many of the most popular apps and devices are hardly brand new—the world got their hands on the first iPads in 2010, and YouTube streamed its first funny cat video almost twenty years ago, when younger Boomers were in their 30s. And according to data from the Pew Research Center, 96 percent of adults aged 50 to 64 and 75 percent of those aged 65 and older are online.<sup>3</sup> Sure, most older adults aren’t using technology the same way as their younger counterparts—don’t expect grandpa to bust out the latest TikTok dance—but they are using technology effectively on their own terms, even if the font size on the screen might be a little bigger.



### Who is really online?

**96 percent** of those ages 50 to 64 are online, along with **75 percent** of those aged 65 and older.<sup>3</sup>

# Are Older Adults Being Left Behind in the Digital Healthcare Revolution?

## Continued

As the Baby Boomer generation continues to age into Medicare qualification, one of the largest health-related goals is the strong desire to age in place. According to a recent 'Aging in Place' survey, a whopping 93 percent of respondents agreed that aging in place is an important goal for them.<sup>4</sup> Of the reasons that people over the age of 55 may choose to incorporate health-related technologies into their day-to-day routines, 49 percent of the respondents claim that general aging is their primary reason.<sup>5</sup> In order to ensure they're able to age in place for as long as possible, many older adults are willing to adopt new health-related technologies to make this process as safe and enjoyable as possible.

Approximately 53 percent of U.S. adults age 55 and older currently use some type of assistive or health-related technology,<sup>6</sup> and of the 47 percent surveyed who say they don't currently use assistive or health-related technologies, the overwhelming majority (70 percent), responded that they simply didn't feel that they needed them yet. But of those who do use them, two of the most widely used technologies by respondents include medical or health-related mobile apps (25 percent) and wearable medical or health-related trackers (17 percent).<sup>7</sup>

And when older adults are utilizing digital patient care, data supports that their activation increases, too. According to internal MedBridge data, when patients are prescribed home programs electronically, activation dramatically increases across age ranges, but would you believe that the highest activation rates—63 percent—occurred in ages 60 to 79? Going back to that sample of 534,236 patients served in the 60 to 69 age range, only 20 percent (106,847) were offered a digital program by their provider. Given the 63 percent overall activation rate in that age group, if the remaining 427,389 were offered digital programs and 63 percent of those activated, you could potentially see increased activation in **269,255 more patients.**

Our internal data also found that when you incorporate remote therapeutic monitoring techniques, activation is driven even higher—up to 81 percent in ages 60 to 69 and 83 percent in ages 70 to 79! How many more could you activate by including RTM techniques—even if you don't choose to bill? When you put it all together, the dramatic boost in patient activation can have huge downstream effects.

---

# 63%

of participants aged 60 - 79 increased their activation when prescribed home programs electronically.

# 81%

of participants aged 60 - 69 increased their activation when RTM techniques were incorporated.

# 83%

of participants aged 70 - 79 increased their activation when RTM techniques were incorporated.



## How Digital Patient Care and RTM Improve Patient Activation in Older Adults

Now that you've seen the results, let's look at a few of the digital patient care tools that can make it all possible.

### Online Home Exercise Programs

Home exercise programs (HEPs) are a key component of high-quality therapy, providing important care continuity for patients while reducing the cost and time commitment of supervised therapy sessions for providers. This helps patients stay on track with their care plan, and provides flexibility to their exercise regimen, making it easier for them to fit it into their busy schedules.

In one MedBridge success story, a partner organization had their clinicians assign their patients customized care plans using MedBridge HEP, which engages patients using evidence-based best practices and a digital-first approach. During this period, they saw a 110 percent increase in HEP programs assigned to patients, increased patient conversion rate from evaluation to care by 9 percent, and improved outcomes per visit, with 12 percent higher FOTO effectiveness scores.<sup>8</sup> Simply put, when patients are prescribed HEPs, it works—and older adults shouldn't be excluded from the benefits.

### Online Patient Education

Patient self-management is key, and educating patients on their condition, their exercise regimen, and important lifestyle changes can boost self-efficacy and promote recovery over the long term. A review of 37 randomized controlled trials found that providing patients with targeted education materials led to greater satisfaction with care.<sup>9</sup> With a comprehensive online patient education library, clinicians can easily assign engaging, high-quality resources to patients so they can learn more at their own convenience. This way patients can come to their appointments with a better understanding of their condition, and the visit can be spent providing treatment, discussing care plans, or answering patient questions.

### A Digital Healthcare Success Story

Want to find out how our partner organization achieved these amazing results?

[Hear their story here.](#)

# How Digital Patient Care and RTM Improve Patient Activation in Older Adults

Continued

## Patient Mobile Apps

Smartphone ownership has increased dramatically in recent years, with 96 percent of adults ages 50 to 65 and 75 percent of adults ages 65 and over utilizing the technology.<sup>10</sup> Digital patient care is right there waiting for them in their pocket—all we have to do is unlock its potential! Patient mobile apps are a convenient way to let patients access their care plans, view their progress, and communicate with their providers between visits. In fact, one study found 82 percent of patients indicated mobile apps had a positive impact on their ability to engage in exercise activity.<sup>11</sup> Why? The ability to improve patient engagement through gamification, push notifications, and two-way messaging—not to mention better communication between patients and clinicians—results in a stronger therapeutic alliance.

## Remote Therapeutic Monitoring

RTM is where everything comes together. Providing remote care to patients via high-quality digital healthcare technologies improves access to care, resulting in better patient outcomes, satisfaction, and retention. The beauty of RTM is that it can be incorporated with the aforementioned digital health tools to improve patient adherence and engagement and collect better data, all while adding an additional revenue stream! Providers can monitor non-physiologic patient data, including program adherence, pain levels, and patient feedback; communicate with patients between sessions using in-app messaging and virtual visits; and adjust the program as needed to optimize patient outcomes.

MedBridge customers using remote monitoring are seeing a 270 percent improvement in patient engagement and 243 percent better patient activation, leading to better patient retention rates and higher rates of care program completion. And due to the CPT codes, providers can be reimbursed for providing that additional care to Medicare patients. This will only become more valuable over the next decade when the number of Medicare-eligible adults reaches record highs.

To illustrate how this can work, let's look at a digital patient care success story, where remote therapeutic monitoring was successfully blended into an existing digital patient care strategy to improve patient activation and satisfaction.



**82%**

of patients indicated mobile apps had a positive impact on their ability to engage in exercise activity.<sup>11</sup>



**270%**

MedBridge customers using remote monitoring are seeing a **270 percent** improvement in patient engagement and 243 percent better patient activation.

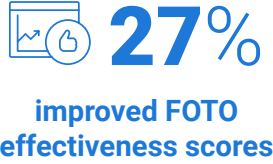
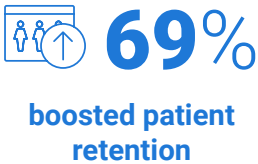
# How Digital Patient Care and RTM Improve Patient Activation in Older Adults

Continued

## A Digital Patient Care Success Story

At CORA Health Services, MedBridge’s digital patient care solutions were already helping the multi-clinic physical therapy organization significantly boost patient engagement and outcomes. When Medicare introduced the RTM CPT codes in early 2022, outpatient rehab providers and organizations (and other providers billing Medicare Part B) gained the ability to bill for remote episodic patient care—a treatment modality shown to improve the patient experience and therapeutic outcomes.

To elevate its digital patient care, CORA partnered with MedBridge to implement a virtual end-to-end solution for tracking and reporting activities related to RTM. This standardized, repeatable, and easy-to-manage process helped CORA successfully leverage RTM as a strategic driver to optimize its digital care program—improving patient activation, keeping patients even more engaged throughout their episode of care, and collecting additional revenue by meeting RTM code requirements that request patients and clinicians to regularly log data online. **By adding RTM to its existing care model, CORA experienced the following:**







## Best Practices for Engaging Older Adults in Digital Care

Despite high activation rates once older adults get started with digital care, the initial buy-in phase for older adults can be slower. Part of the reason is because the tools can initially feel unfamiliar, and many new technologies are designed by those on the younger end of the spectrum.

Successfully engaging older adults in new technologies requires stepping into their shoes with design elements that accommodate an aging population such as clear language, large fonts, and images illustrating steps. To help your older patients engage with—and stay engaged with—technology, it's important to ensure that your digital care tools and accompanying help materials are as accessible as possible for them.

### Best Practices for Engaging Older Adults in Digital Care

**Give every patient the option to engage online.**

**Explain to your patients which digital tools are available to them.** Follow up with what their benefits are, both in person and with educational materials.

**Provide instructional materials.** Make sure they are concise, clear, and accessible.

**Use easy-to-understand language.** Avoid technical jargon. If you direct users to access additional content via QR codes or app stores, be sure to also include clear explanations for how to do so.

**Incorporate images.** Visuals help better explain and illustrate steps.





## How MedBridge Can Help

Meet the needs of your patients, no matter their age, with the comprehensive MedBridge Digital Patient Engagement Solution for Hospitals & Health Systems and Private Practices. Our best-in-class virtual patient engagement tools and evidence-based clinical and patient education are designed to improve communication and access to care, enhance patient self-efficacy, and increase patient activation and adherence.

### MedBridge Remote Therapeutic Monitoring Solution

The MedBridge RTM Solution helps keep patients engaged in their care with robust engagement and patient monitoring tools combined with powerful, intuitive analytics and reporting. Designed to help clinicians get reimbursed for remote monitoring of Medicare patients, our RTM Solution is an effective, easy-to-use tool for improving engagement and outcomes in older adults while increasing patient retention and revenue.

- ✓ **Two-way messaging**  
Bridge the patient-provider divide with two-way messaging capabilities that boost the therapeutic alliance.
- ✓ **Billing milestone notifications**  
See if your patient is on track to hit RTM billing milestones and generate an activity report for billing purposes in a couple clicks.
- ✓ **Updated Billing Dashboards**  
Our dedicated dashboard for each RTM billing code helps you quickly see who is performing well, and who may need additional support.
- ✓ **Patient Education**  
Help patients understand their diagnosis and rehabilitation plan with engaging education to encourage them to effectively manage their care plan.
- ✓ **HEP Program Builder**  
Engage patients with an easily accessible and customizable library with thousands of video exercises developed by industry professionals.
- ✓ **MedBridge GO**  
Engage patients and promote adherence by prescribing home exercises in easy daily doses and allowing patients to reach out with questions or concerns.
- ✓ **EMR Integration**  
Spend time with patients—not patient records—with HIPAA-compliant, streamlined EMR capabilities.
- ✓ **Telehealth Virtual Visits**  
Replace or supplement in-person visits for low-risk patients with effective, user-friendly telehealth tools.



## Conclusion

The coming influx of Medicare-eligible adults in the next ten years is going to be one of the defining challenges the healthcare industry faces over the next several decades. Digital care innovations and hybrid-care models offer a promising solution, but only if we cast aside our preconceived notions and make them available to all. Simply put, the human and financial cost of leaving older adults behind in the digital healthcare boom is something we can't afford. The good news? Older adults are more adept at utilizing technology than their reputation might indicate, and are open to using the technology that has the power to revolutionize the healthcare industry—if we give them a fair chance.

# References

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/deborahwince-smith/2022/02/25/bracing-for-the-silver-tsunami/?sh=163bbaa633e4>
2. <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-for-senior-citizens/>
3. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/01/13/share-of-those-65-and-older-who-are-tech-users-has-grown-in-the-past-decade/>
- 4-7. <https://www.usnews.com/360-reviews/services/senior-tech-aging-in-place-survey>
8. <https://www.medbridge.com/enterprise/customer-stories/cora-health-services/>
9. Jeste DV, Dunn LB, Folsom DP, Zisook D. Multimedia educational aids for improving consumer knowledge about illness management and treatment decisions: a review of randomized controlled trials. *J Psychiatr Res.* 2008 Jan;42(1):1-21.
10. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/01/13/share-of-those-65-and-older-who-are-tech-users-has-grown-in-the-past-decade/>
11. Statista.com, Impact of health and wellbeing mobile apps use in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2015, by mobile app type



## ABOUT MEDBRIDGE

Combining powerful digital patient care tools with the highest quality education, MedBridge is committed to making healthcare better for both providers and patients. Organizations across the care continuum use MedBridge to provide an enriched, digitally enabled experience that engages patients while streamlining and simplifying care. Designed with over a decade of insight from more than 300,000 clinicians and 25 million patients, MedBridge has helped thousands of organizations realize better patient outcomes. [Learn more.](#)

See how MedBridge can help your organization.

[Contact us to request a demo.](#)