

CASE STUDY

How COVID-19 Accelerated Health System and Employer Partnerships





Despite the toll the pandemic has taken on healthcare this year, direct primary care providers have stormed the market. Backed by funding from venture capitalists and private equity firms, these primary care companies are looking to take advantage of the nation's increasing healthcare spend and aging population.

Companies such as Oak Street Health and One Medical are focused on primary care initiatives and are looking to grab a large share of the market by targeting preventive care and reducing the utilization of hospitals and specialists. These companies rely on attracting patients away from hospitals and health systems, subsequently driving down revenue and changing referral patterns for these entities.

Both Oak Street Health and One Medical have reported significant increases in year-over-year revenue and membership¹ despite the pandemic. In fact, the pandemic may have actually contributed to the growth of these companies as they capitalized on pent-up demand for healthcare services and employers bringing staff back to the workplace as they reopen.

The third quarter of 2020 provided a major increase in billable revenue and membership enrollment for both companies as a result of demand for flu vaccinations, COVID screening and testing, and primary care services that had long been delayed by patients. The companies also saw COVID as an opportunity to obtain new patients. Oak Street Health launched an online COVID-19 chatbot² to check symptoms and answer questions. One Medical realized the potential in employer clients, and as a result, launched a return-to-work program³ for employers that includes screening, testing and 24/7 access to virtual care.

How Applied Health Analytics' Clients Have Used Return-to-Work Strategies to Accelerate Employer Partnerships

Hospitals and health systems can protect their primary care perimeter by launching their own return-to-work initiatives targeted specifically to employers. COVID has opened the door for hospitals and health systems to partner with employers who are seeking assistance on how to bring employees back to work safely. There are a number of strategies that hospitals and health systems can utilize that will demonstrate a commitment to keeping an employer's workforce healthy while simultaneously fending off the onslaught of new direct primary care entrants. Many are offering on-site employee screenings,

virtual symptom checkers, COVID-19 hotlines and telehealth consultations. However, some hospitals and health systems are differentiating their employer COVID strategies with specialized services to assist with reopening.

Below are some of the unique tactics Applied Health Analytics' clients are utilizing to start conversations with local employers who are seeking expert guidance on how to protect their employees:



University Hospitals, Cleveland, Ohio

University Hospitals offers the Healthy Restart Program⁴ which includes a variety of support services to employers who are bringing employees back to the workplace.

UH also deploys their team of internal experts to provide a more hands-on approach to assisting employers with reopening:

- **Clinical Review of Reopening Plans:** UH safety officers and infection control nurses will review reopening plans submitted by employers. They will conduct a thorough examination of the plans and provide feedback and recommendations for improvement that will increase safety and compliance.
- **N95 Mask Fittings:** For employers who want employees to utilize N95 respirators, UH occupational health nurses will provide personal fittings to ensure that respirators are worn correctly and provide maximum protection.
- **Employer Site Visits and Consultations:** A UH team that includes safety specialists, industrial hygienists and chemical safety officers will visit employer facilities to assess and provide recommendations on engineering solutions, physical distancing, cleaning procedures and the use and disposal of PPE.



Baptist Health, Jacksonville, Florida

Baptist Health Jacksonville's PATH Back to Work⁸ includes clinical expertise, guidance and resources to support employers as they reopen.

Baptist Health Jacksonville offers consultations to evaluate reopening efforts as well as provides the following solutions to employers:

- **Nurse Triage Line:** An employer will have a dedicated nurse line with an RN that answers employee questions regarding symptoms, testing and positive results. The nurse line is available Monday thru Friday from 6am to 5pm. However, recognizing that not all employers have traditional work hours, an employer can arrange to have their dedicated line available for extended hours and/or on weekends.
- **Face Masks that Help a Cause:** Baptist Health Jacksonville has partnered with Rethreaded⁹, a non-profit organization that assists victims of human trafficking, to offer cloth face masks for purchase. An employer can purchase the reusable masks for their employees for \$5 apiece, with a portion directly benefiting survivors of human trafficking.



Atrium Health, Charlotte, North Carolina

Atrium Health's COVID-Safe for Employers⁷ initiative provides guidance and support that can be customized to meet an employer's specific needs.

The services Atrium Health provides to employers include:

- **Exposure Management Tracking:** Atrium Health will determine levels of exposure in the workplace and determine which employees are high-risk and should be quarantined at home. These high-risk individuals are admitted to Atrium Health's virtual observation unit where they are cared for remotely using telemedicine. The telemedicine team determines if the employee should be tested for COVID. Employees who test positive are admitted to Atrium Health's Virtual Hospital and are assigned their own nurse who administers care remotely as the employee recovers in the comfort of their own home.
- **On-site Antibody Testing:** A team of trained Atrium Health professionals will administer COVID-19 antibody testing at the employer's facility. The antibody testing was validated at Atrium Health's laboratory, ensuring that employees are receiving results that can be verified and trusted. The on-site team screens all employees prior to testing and also provides details about the test and an explanation of results.



Wake Forest Baptist Health, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

As part of BestHealth for Business,⁵ Wake Forest Baptist Health offers a full range of return-to-work initiatives as well as specialized services to assist employers.

Wake Forest Baptist Health's employer services include:

- **Prevention Training and Employee Communications:** Staff from Wake Forest Baptist Health will provide training and communications to an employer's workforce to review hand hygiene; proper mask wearing, reuse and disposal; and factors that are specific to the work environment and facility. Wake Forest Baptist Health will help the employer develop and adopt protocols that meet the unique needs of their work environment, as well as design, develop and disseminate ongoing employee communications.
- **Web-based Symptom Survey Tool:** Led by Dr. William Satterwhite, III, JD, MD, Chief Wellness Officer at Wake Forest Baptist Health, SneezSafe⁶ was built to help easily screen employees for symptoms of COVID. Available on any device, SneezSafe asks a series of symptom questions and instantly clears employees with a date and time stamp. Those with symptoms are flagged and are directed to a call button that connects them to the nurse triage line. SneezSafe sends daily reminders to employees to complete the symptom survey as well provides real-time dashboards for employers to monitor test results.

COVID has opened the door for hospitals and health systems who are looking to build direct-to-employer relationships. By providing expert guidance, personalized consultations, on-site testing and clinical staff, health systems are developing partnerships that can extend beyond the pandemic. Caring for employees now will encourage employers to work with health systems to continue to provide care for their workforce going forward.

Applied Health Analytics positions hospitals and health systems as the preferred providers of employee population health management and can help secure relationships to continue to provide care beyond COVID.



Applied Health Analytics' Approach

The experienced professionals at Applied Health Analytics work with hospital and health system leadership to define the strategy and tactics important to the successful launch of employer initiatives. This includes strategy sessions to define effective tactics that will open the door to conversations with employer groups.

Applied Health Analytics comprehensive approach includes:

Strategy Development

Applied Health Analytics personnel audit existing commercial market initiatives and provide a thorough internal and external review. The team provides system-specific recommendations for the structure, resources, budgets and tools needed to implement a strategy that fulfills the population health demands of local employers and supports the revenue interests of the hospital or health system.

Interim Management

When new initiatives are launched, Applied Health Analytics provides interim, in-market leadership as the supporting team is identified, trained and deployed to execute the initiative. This important aspect offers leadership the confidence of a successful launch that positively reflects on the organization's image, personnel and service quality.

Strategic Leadership

Applied Health Analytics provides full-time, professional management and execution of the commercial market strategy. The team recruits, trains and manages a senior executive who understands the role and optimizes the delivery of the commercial strategy. The senior executive is positioned to assess and communicate strategy progress, challenges, metrics and ongoing initiative development.



Applied Health Analytics can help create a strategic plan to reach employers who are looking for expert guidance on reopening. Once the partnership is formed, Applied Health Analytics links proprietary risk analytics and engagement technology with health system resources to offer employers a complete array of evidence-based, early detection and prevention initiatives. Utilizing Applied Health Analytics' technology, employers can identify high-risk conditions that are prevalent in their employee population and create wellbeing programs to address these health needs.

About Applied Health Analytics

Founded in 2009, Nashville-based Applied Health Analytics, LLC provides a range of analytics, technology and services to hospitals and health systems that support population health, value-based care arrangements, employer-centric strategies and risk-based contracting. Applied Health Analytics, a joint-venture partner with Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Charlotte, North Carolina-based Atrium Health, empowers hospitals and health systems to administer programs that influence a positive payer mix, reduce health benefit costs, improve quality outcomes and manage patient health.

References

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