From Private Practice
to a Hospital-Owned Group...
and Back Again!

Bella Terra Primary Care

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Bella Terra Primary Care

Dr. Nishu Karki of California's Bella Terra Primary Care talks with us about her experiences moving from working as a hospitalist at multiple groups to private practice.

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Ready for Windows 11?

by Andersen Silva

The next version of Microsoft's operating system, Windows 11, was announced this June 24th. A free upgrade for eligible Windows 10 PCs, the new OS will be pushed out near the end of the year. The single-most noticeable change from older versions? Probably the Start button moving to the center of the taskbar from the left side (though you can change it back). The taskbar itself can only be located at the bottom of the screen.

Microsoft Windows remains the most commonly-used computer operating system in the world. With this upgrade, the company clearly aims to keep competing with Apple and Google to stay on top. Apple's macOS Big Sur and Monterey can now run iOS and iPadOS apps natively on M1-powered Macintosh computers. Chromebooks can install Android apps… and Windows 11 PCs can, too. While Microsoft isn't allowing the Google Play Store on its OS, the Amazon Appstore will be available, and Android apps can be sideloaded as well.

If you've been clinging to Internet Explorer in spite of Microsoft replacing the browser with Edge, well, it will finally be removed in Windows 11. Edge does have IE mode for those sites that lag behind. Another area where Microsoft is playing catch-up with Apple is desktop widgets. While Windows has had various widget-like functionality since Vista, it hasn't taken off the way macOS' Notification Center widgets did. And while macOS doesn't support touch, Windows already does and 11 looks set to make it friendlier.

PCs are of course a huge platform for gaming, and new features in Windows 11 will improve the speed, performance, and appearance of PC games. The Xbox app will also be installed by default, allowing access to your Xbox library and cloud gaming (with a subscription) right on the PC.

The Redmond, WA company also announced Windows 365 earlier this year.

The "cloud PC" will allow you to set up a virtual computer that can be accessed via a Web browser or RDP client, even from a late-model iPad. A fast and reliable Internet connection is required, needless to say. The ability to access the same applications and data from any device, anywhere makes it very appealing for businesses. Cloud services have been available in a server model for some time now, but Microsoft is looking to change the game by making Windows 10 (or eventually Windows 11) PCs available in the cloud. As the system requirements for the new operating system are more stringent and some older devices will be left behind, Windows 365 could be an option worth considering.

Early adopters or beta testers of an OS upgrade can often expect a bumpy ride. Waiting a few weeks to upgrade makes for a better experience, as bugs are discovered and addressed, and application updates allow for better compatibility. That being said, we are looking forward to getting our hands on (and under the hood of) Windows 11… how about you?

Letter from the Publisher

The start of a new year is traditionally a time of change. Many people will make resolutions: lose weight, stop smoking, travel more, spend less, take up a new hobby, stop procrastinating (next week!). Many of those people won't get too far before breaking their resolutions, for one reason or another; still, the desire to change is there.

Businesses can and do change, too, hopefully for the better. Reports and budgets are analyzed at the beginning of a new year, to determine how a company has done over the past twelve months and how it expects to do over the next twelve. Sometimes it's decided to stay the course, sometimes drastic measures are required. And sometimes it's time for a little celebration.

Healthcare IT consulting firm Microwize Technology (of which I am president and CEO) made the Inc. 5000 list of fastest-growing privately-held companies in the nation this year. Microwize was also named a 2021 Best of Cloud Computing winner by Up-City. The past 24 months have challenged us all in many ways, but it is still possible, even essential, to thrive and to grow. And that means change.

Innovating and keeping up with (and ahead of) the dynamically-changing world can take a lot of time and energy, but it can be so rewarding, personally and financially. As the saying goes, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got." You've got to shake things up and get outside your comfort zone if you want to grow and reap new and better benefits. But to make it work and stick to the plan, you have to set realistic, incremental, achievable goals.
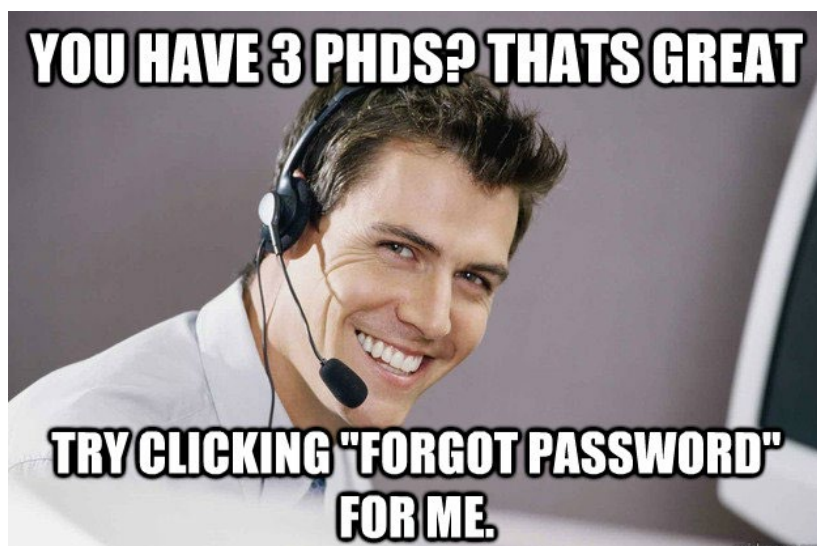
Don't say "I'm going to lose 40 pounds in 2022," do say "I'm going to lose three pounds a month." Don't say "I'll double my business next year," do say "I'll increase my qualified leads by 25% a quarter in 2022."

I hope everyone has a happy and healthy holiday season and New Year!

Robert Gabriel

Humerus Corner

YOU HAVE 3 PHDS? THATS GREAT TRY CLICKING "FORGOT PASSWORD" FOR ME.

NJ Non-Profit Hospitals Get Tax Break
by Andersen Silva

A 2021 law drafted as a compromise between tax-exempt non-profit hospitals and the NJ municipalities in which they're located is being challenged by a lawsuit. State legislators tried to address the dispute, where billion-dollar hospitals paid little to nothing in property taxes, with the law. A 2015 court ruling found that Morristown Medical Center was liable for taxes as a result of operating in large part as a for-profit organization. This triggered dozens of more suits from frustrated municipalities.

The pain point? Most of the 71 hospitals in New Jersey are non-profit companies. They are therefore tax-exempt despite belonging to large, for-profit healthcare groups. The state infamously has the highest property taxes in the country. Local officials would like to have the hospitals contribute to shared local services like police, firefighting, and waste disposal. Legislation voted on last December requires the facilities to make payments for "community service" to their host municipalities, but maintains their tax-exempt status.

While the legislators hailed the compromise as a victory, towns and cities across NJ sued. The lawsuit states that taxpayers in these municipalities hosting hospitals will be "effectively subsidizing for-profit hospitals that are 'non-profit' in name only." A hearing will take place in November in state Superior Court. Governor Phil Murphy is named as the defendant, and the suit aims to block enforcement and eventually void the law.

The main lobbyist for NJ's communities opposed the bill and supports the lawsuit. However, the New Jersey State League of Municipalities is not joining the case. The New Jersey Hospital Association declined comment on the lawsuit, as did the Attorney General's office. Consumer activist organization New Jersey Citizen Action filed a petition to join the suit. The group feels healthcare should be "effective and compassionate" but will be neither when driven by profits. A judge declined Citizen Action's request.

There are pros and cons to operating as a non-profit or a for-profit healthcare organization. Either way, community services and resources aren't provided for free.

Optimize Revenue Collection with Innovative Patient Communication and Payment Options!

by Jacqueline Martinez

Imagine the day when you don't have to worry about account receivables and every patient pays their balance in full. While that may seem like a dream, fine-tuning operations can heavily impact the rate at which a physician's office receives revenue collection. In fact, many practices continue to use outdated methods that inhibit their ability to maximize revenue potential. According to a recent article published by Physician's Weekly (2021), practices need to self-evaluate their processes and not be afraid to make enhancements, including with how they interact with patients.
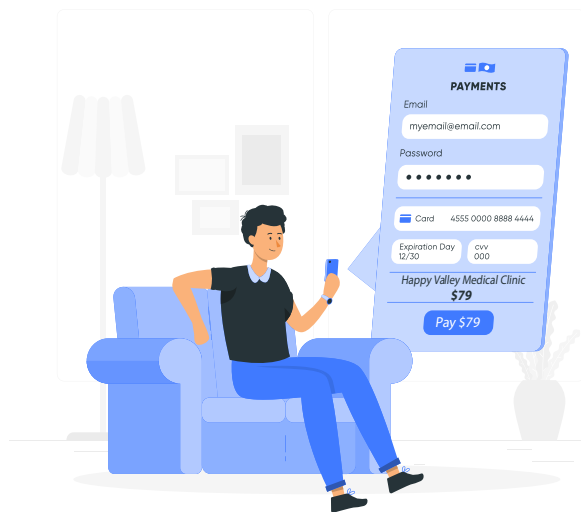
One area in which a practice can make proactive measures to increase revenue opportunities is by enhancing the way in which patients receive their bills and implementing multiple ways for payment collection. In fact, text and email are the most effective communication methods according to Physician's Weekly (2021), as reliance on paper-only methods does not entice patients to pay their bills.

Contrary to belief, patients want to be responsible for their medical bills and are seeking more payment options. Consumers are showing a higher demand for contactless payments and the ability to work with their provider to create payment plan or auto-payment options. Unfortunately, many providers have not adapted to their consumers' needs and continue to operate with traditional methods, creating a dissatisfaction amongst their consumers. In addition, optimizing staff communication with patients is critical to maximize their satisfaction, which directly impacts their motivation towards paying their bills and retaining them for future office visits.

Medical practices and billers can enhance their revenue collection opportunities by partnering with BillFlash for innovative billing modalities and various payment collection features that consumers highly desire.

In addition, with integrated payment features, patients can make payments online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and the payments received will auto-populate into your billing software. Furthermore, practices can enhance how they interact with patients with larger balances. With features such as StoredPay, AutoPay, and PlanPay, BillFlash facilitates additional payment features for practices by providing flexible options on the practice's terms. Now, you can take your accounts receivables one step further with BillFlash's integrated collection services. BillFlash, your trusted provider, works directly with your past-due accounts to maximize revenue collection on terms you approve!

With the ability to customize messaging on patient statements, eBills, text notifications, and so much more, you are in the driver's seat while BillFlash optimizes your revenue collection potential under the hood!
For more information about automated patient statements and patient payment options, go to microwize.com/billflash, or call them at 201-322-4100.

Resources:
Finelli, E. (2021). How Medical Practices Can Optimize Their Revenue Cycle Management. Physician's Weekly. Retrieved from https://www.physiciansweekly.com/how-medical-practices-can-optimize-their-revenue-cycle-management

Ransomware Attacks:
The New Normal?
by Andersen Silva

Don't hold your breath; ransomware is not going away anytime soon. These insidious attacks require little effort on the part of bad actors for potentially large payoffs. Bringing these attackers to justice is a complex, time-consuming endeavor for multiple law enforcement agencies, often spanning the globe, and while there have been some arrests, indictments, and even a few convictions, there are still many out there willing to take the risk. A robust cybersecurity plan is crucial for any business to avoid falling victim or to survive a successful cyberattack.

Hacker groups Hive, REvil, DarkSide, and others, sometimes with alleged ties to Russia and China, are suspected of being behind high-profile cyberattacks of Microsoft, Kaseya, SolarWinds, Acer, the Colonial Pipeline, and more. Millions of dollars in cryptocurrency has been paid as ransom by companies desperate to regain access to data and end the nightmare, though the FBI and other law enforcement agencies recommend against making ransom payments. Some of the money has actually been recovered, notably in the Colonial Pipeline case, but paying cyberattackers is no guarantee of data recovery and encourages them and others to continue the illegal activity.

Healthcare organizations may not consider themselves targets for ransomware, but the sensitive nature of the data their systems hold, coupled with the potential to impact patients' health, make them lucrative to cybercriminals. If a hardened defense isn't implemented and security is breached, these organizations are likely to bow to the attackers' demands simply to continue caring for patients. Several victimized systems this year found themselves needing to divert ambulances to other facilities, and millions of records may have been compromised during ransomware and other cyberattacks.

There have already been over 50 ransomware attacks against U.S. healthcare targets in 2021. While some cybercriminal groups have announced that they will not deliberately attack critical infrastructure including hospitals, it is clear that these organizations remain at risk. A focus on cybersecurity is ever more indispensable, as these kinds of attacks are only increasing in frequency. To best care for its patients and safeguard its bottom line and reputation, every healthcare practice and facility must have systems in place to back up data securely and keep bad actors out. For better or worse, this seems to be the new normal.

5 Questions About Your Reports

"You can't manage what you don't measure." Running reports, and then reading and understanding them, can be invaluable for your organization's financial health and make audits less painful. From claims rejections to insurance aging to patient attrition to production reports (and more!), use your data to keep everything running smoothly and efficiently.

### Q1: How often are you running financial reports for your organization?

- Weekly
- Bi-weekly
- A few times a year
- Once a year
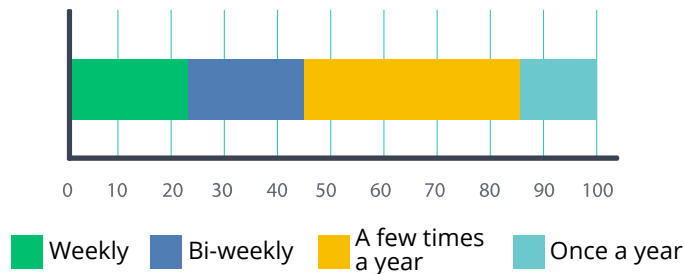
40.3% of healthcare providers are running financial reports **a few times a year** for their organization

Q2: Has your organization ever performed a third-party medical billing audit?


- Yes
- No
- I am not sure
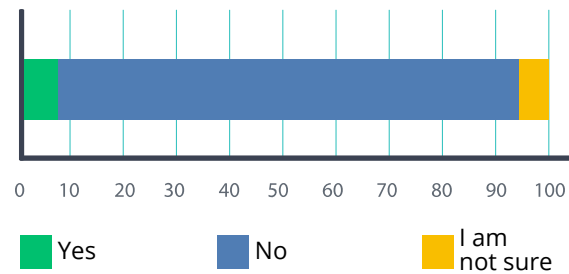
85.29% of healthcare providers have **never** performed a third-party medical billing audit

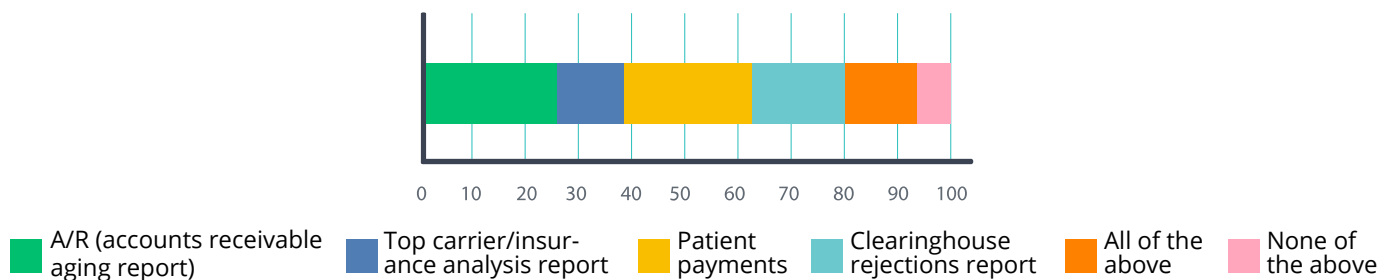### Q3: How often has your organization been audited by an insurance carrier?

- More than once a year
- Once
- Every few years
- Never
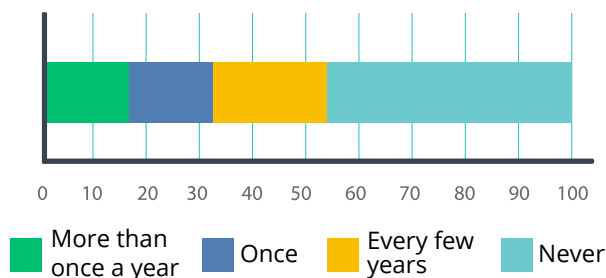
45.59% of healthcare organizations have **never** been audited by an insurance carrier

Q4: How important do you think medical coding audits are to an organization?

- Not important
- Somewhat important
- Very important
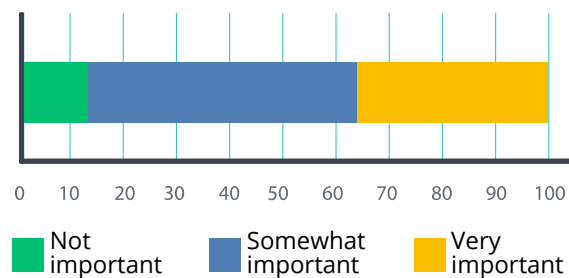
50% of healthcare providers think that medical coding audits are **somewhat** important to an organization

Q5: Which reports are you most familiar with?

- A/R (accounts receivable aging report)
- Top carrier/insurance analysis report
- Patient payments
- Clearinghouse rejections report
- All of the above
- None of the above

26.71% of healthcare providers are most familiar with A/R (accounts receivable aging report)

I f a medical practice is a business and for-profit, why is the business aspect of running a practice ignored in medical schools? I also want physicians who are business-savvy to stay independent while controlling the physician/patient relationship. There are some exceptions to the "business education" shortcomings. It was assumed by most medical teaching programs that when the physician started in the practice/business of medicine, he or she was smart enough to learn the business of medicine through exposure and trial and error. Whether this was true in the past or not is irrelevant; it certainly is not true today. The healthcare industry today and tomorrow is much too complicated to expect business concepts to work.

Business 101
In order to grasp and apply the concepts of the business of medicine utilizing Provider Production Optimization, the business concepts will have to include profit vs. overhead.

That is why more and more providers are no longer trying to bother with running the practice as a business, and would rather sell out to a health group (hospital) and just become an employee. Is that due to the physicians never having learned "Business 101," or is it because running a medical practice is becoming harder and harder? While both arguments are valid reasons for physicians to get out of running a medical practice's business, it is a dangerous situation for the providers and patients equally, for the following reasons:

1. We will see healthcare is turning into a monopoly, or at least to a chain, similar to what happened with fast food.
2. Hospitals will create a closed system where payers (insurance companies) will no longer credential outside physicians to start medical practices in the future.
3. It is borderline illegal (Stark Law) to have a physician that is employed by a hospital only be able to refer patients and medical procedures to be done by the closed network and hospital equipment.
4. It is not rocket science to assume all of the above will result in higher healthcare costs with fewer options.
5. Follow the money: fewer and fewer smart students will ever want to go to medical school to become physicians.

I know that the above is not why you went to medical school, even if you were thinking economically as well as altruistically. Economics (money) ultimately drives almost everything and almost every decision in some way, whether you want it to or not. Healthcare is no exception. You as the owner (or co-owner) of your practice have the dollar allocation power and will ultimately determine whether you and your practice survive and prosper or not. It is perfectly OK to think of your medical practice as a business that needs to be profitable.

Healthcare IT Tips - How to spot a phishing email

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: PayPal <paypal@notice-access.273.com>
To:
Sent: Wednesday, January 25, 2007 10:13 AM
Subject: Your Account Has Been Limited (Case ID Number: PP-003-131-323-557)

PayPal

Dear Customer,

We need your help resolving an issue with your account. To give us time to work together on this, we've temporary limited what you can do with your account until the issue is resolved.

How you can help?

It's usually pretty easy to take care of things like this. Most of the time we just need a little more information about your account. To help us with this and to find out what you can do and can't do with your account until the issue is resolved, log in to your account and go to the Resolution Center.

Log In

Check the sender's email address matches the website address

Beware of emails with generic introductions: 'Dear customer'

No matter who you think it could be from, always be suspicious of an email that asks for your personal information or login details

Remember, the phisher is a virtual door to door con artist and can sometimes be very convincing!

From Private Practice to a Hospital-Owned Group... and Back Again!

Featured Practice: Bella Terra Primary Care in Huntington Beach, CA

We spoke with Dr. Nishu Karki at Bella Terra Primary Care in Huntington Beach, CA about her experiences with going from private practice to joining a hospital-owned group... to going back to private practice!

Q: What would you say to physicians on the verge of joining a hospital-owned group?

A: There are pluses and minuses to being part of a group. A hospital environment offers more opportunities to collaborate with peers. However, there is also much more bureaucracy that physicians must address, as opposed to private practice.

Q: What is the most rewarding aspect of practicing medicine as an independent physician?

A: The most rewarding aspect of private practice is having the opportunity to care for my patients on a long-term basis and focus on optimizing their quality of life. As part of a group, one can't always spend as much time or focus on individual patients as one might like.

Nishu Karki, MD

Q: What was the deciding factor for you to leave the hospital-owned medical practice?

A: For me, the deciding factor was the desire to find an acceptable balance between my professional life and my family, something that seemed to have been affected by working for the group.

Q: Is there a difference in the care you are able to provide to your patients since the transition back to private practice?

A: Yes, I feel like can afford to slow down now and fully treat each individual patient to achieve optimal health, compared with working with the hospital where we focused more on acute conditions and quickly getting to the next patient.

Q: What was the most difficult part of your transition back to private practice?

A: I miss the friendships I had with colleagues and coworkers, the interactions with more people than I see on a daily basis in the private practice.

**Q: How did you ensure that your practice would successfully operate as a business?**

A: One must set up the proper legal, accounting, insurance, business, marketing, and technology systems, processes, and procedures in order to operate successfully. You don't go to medical school and learn how to run a thriving business, but in order to keep practicing and help patients, you need to address all these different parts of the business so you can pay for office space, employee salaries, medical equipment, etc. You have expertise in your field, consult experts in these areas.

Q: What advice would you give to physicians on the verge of practicing on their own?

A: Be prepared to wear many hats, meet a payroll, and seek advice in areas you don't know. Have an organic business plan beforehand. Remember that there's more to a successful medical practice than just practicing medicine!
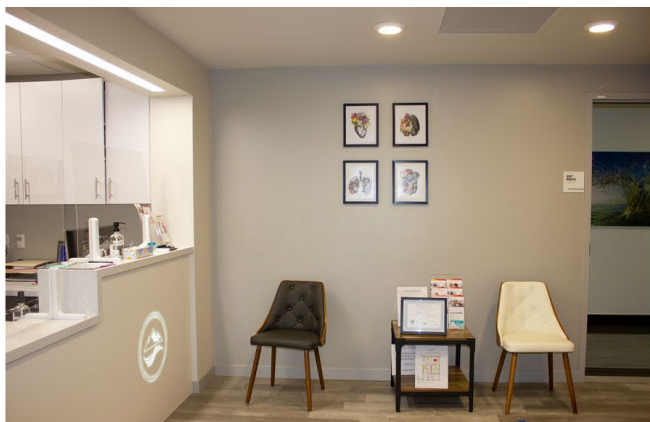
Better Healthcare Through Remote Patient Monitoring

by Yasmin Yasser

''If I had been able to monitor this patient's blood pressure for the past month, I could've prevented her last visit to the ER.''

How many times has this thought crossed your mind? Remote patient monitoring, or RPM, is the newest healthcare technology trend that will allow you to remotely monitor a patient's vital signs and much more, away from typical clinical settings.

Let's first get you acquainted with the term ''remote patient monitoring.''

What is remote patient monitoring?

In simple terms, RPM is a method of healthcare delivery that uses the latest advances in information technology to collect data from patients while they are out of traditional healthcare settings. Using RPM, you will be able to keep track of the vital signs of your chronic patients while they remain in the comfort of their homes. A patient can be on the couch watching TV, or in the backyard watering the garden, and you can still receive pertinent medical data from wearable monitors and a smartphone via secure telecommunications.

How does remote patient monitoring work?

All of your eligible patients will get monitoring devices shipped to their doorstep.

Examples of the devices are:
a) blood pressure and heart rate monitors
b) glucometer to monitor blood glucose
c) weight scale
d) pulse oximeter

Once patients begin to use the devices, data starts synchronizing securely to a platform you can access at all times.

How does remote patient monitoring benefit your practice?

Keep an eye on your patients' vitals 24/7

Most chronic conditions are manageable and much less harmful if they're monitored regularly. You can easily access the software anytime and check on how a certain patient is doing. Through remote patient monitoring and regular patient data, you can catch escalating conditions a lot sooner, and even prevent complications from occurring.

Lower the cost of hospitalizations

The average cost of hospitalizing a diabetic patient is in the neighborhood of $25,000. Consistent tracking of glucose levels lets you address anomalies immediately, saving you and your chronically ill patients time, money, and (most importantly!) health.

Better quality of care and life and assurance to the patients

With remote patient monitoring, patients get the sense that they are taking part in maintaining their own health, and may need fewer and shorter hospital and emergency room visits. In addition, remote monitoring technology assures patients that someone is keeping an eye on them 24/7, which puts them more at ease and is beneficial to their overall health.

How can you start using remote patient monitoring?

Remote patient monitoring platforms such as 100Plus (100plus.com) will connect to your Electronic Health Records (EHR) system and identify those of your patients who are eligible for RPM. After obtaining patient consent, these platforms will ship the user-friendly monitoring devices directly to patients and train them on their use.

Ultimately, remote patient monitoring and other telehealth solutions have been determined to lead to healthier and more satisfied patients, and both healthcare providers and patients who are better informed. As the industry continues to move to value-based care, RPM will become more vital to doctors and patients alike.