Accolade
PERSONALIZED HEALTHCARE

The future is now

Why virtual primary and mental health care are reshaping the healthcare landscape

Accolade Care: A new and improved approach to healthcare

Introduction

The pandemic changed the world and, in the process, exposed the many shortcomings that afflict the U.S. healthcare system. Because of this, one thing became clear — it's time for a change.

What we currently have is a system that's transactional, complicated, siloed and wasteful. What we need is an approach that's holistic, human-centered and tailored to people's needs.

Healthcare is a human experience. People need easy access to virtual primary and mental health care. Access to a support team that helps them navigate appointments, providers and health-care resources. People deserve a personalized healthcare experience that works for them, not against them.

Understanding the challenges people face when trying to access quality primary and mental health care has propelled Accolade to take a new stance on how to fix the current system. One way that we're doing this is with Accolade Care.

Accolade Care is a forward-looking view of healthcare based on a collaborative care model. It's focused on paving new ways for people to access healthcare to improve individuals' all-around wellness.

Human relationships are what powers Accolade Care. We have a 24/7 Care Team to answer any question, at any time. Every one of our primary care physicians (PCPs) come from the top 50 medical schools in the country. Mental health professionals work hand-in-hand with PCPs because we don't draw lines between physical and mental health.

And our providers are available via video or messaging — whatever works best for anyone needing care.

65 million

don't have easy access to a PCP

24 days:

Average length of time it takes to schedule an appointment with a PCP. People shouldn't need to wait to see a doctor.
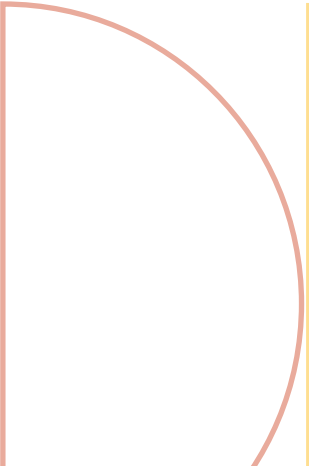
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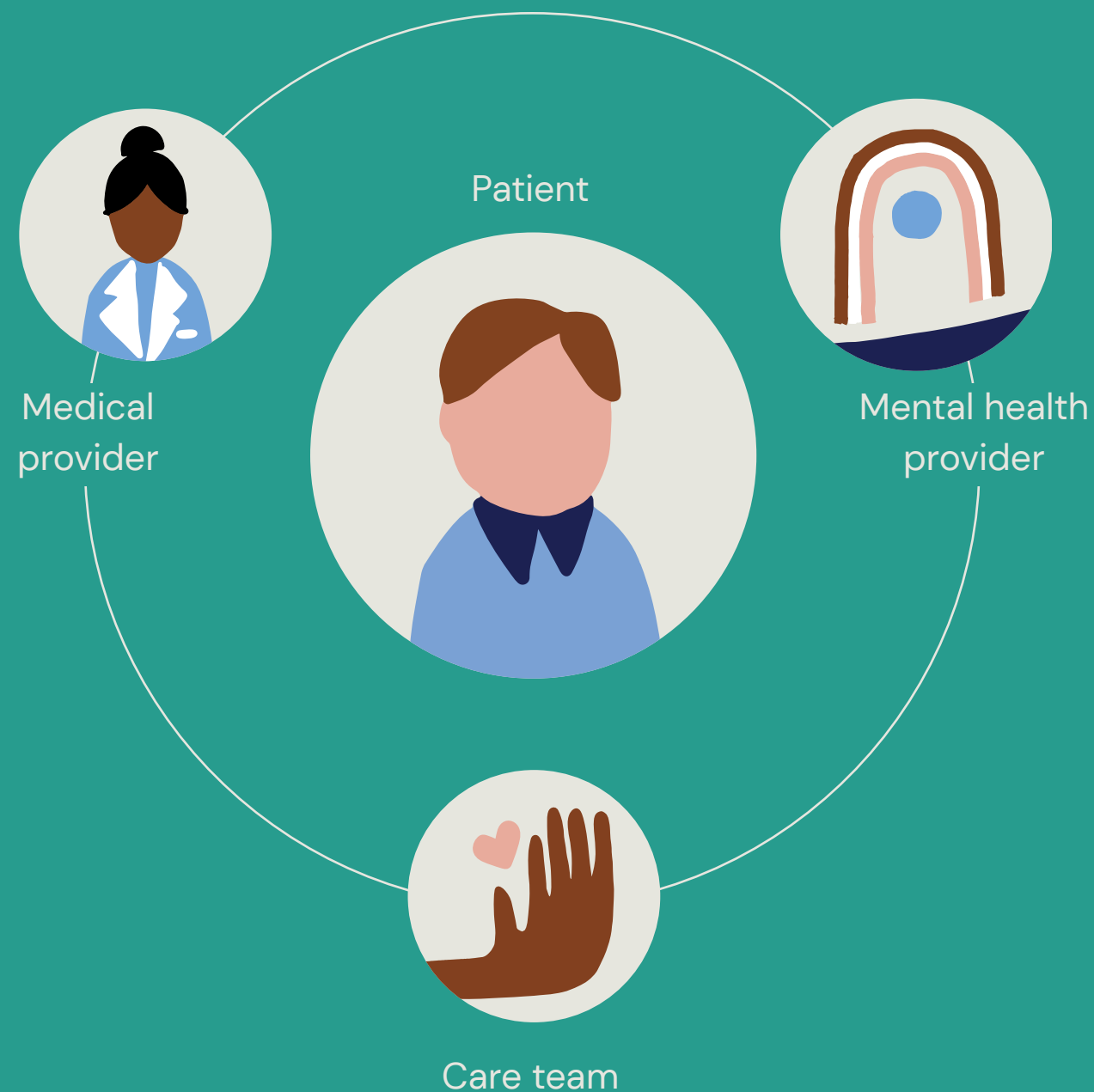of adults don't have a PCP

COVID impact

32%

avoided routine care

31%

suffered from anxiety and depression symptoms[1]

Medical provider

Patient

Mental health provider

Care team

Why a collaborative care model is integral to delivering the best virtual care

Let's be honest: Getting quality primary care and mental health support shouldn't be so hard. With Accolade Care's collaborative model, we're making it easy for people to gain access to the care they need, when they need it.

Studies show that collaborative care models are effective when it comes to controlling costs, improving outcomes and boosting patient satisfaction.[2] And virtual collaborative care is quickly expanding as a healthcare model of choice: McKinsey reports healthcare models are moving from a single-point of service — for example, urgent care — to encompass a wide range of services, with the highest uptick in virtual specialty care around psychiatry and substance abuse.[3]

Our collaborative care model offers an expansive network of providers and treatment options. People can get same-day appointments or simply speak with a Care Team member to find out where to go for what they need.

We've also made it a priority to establish long-term relationships between providers and specialists. We're very intentional about cementing this link and we ensure the interactions between our providers and specialists aren't one-offs. In fact, our physicians, mental health therapists and specialists accompany each person on every step of their journey.

As part of the collaborative care model, we've eliminated the silos between physical and mental health. We don't look at these as two disparate concerns; rather, we view them through a single lens and embrace the idea that physical and mental health are inextricably intertwined and impact and influence each other. When mental health professionals coordinate with PCPs, it becomes clear why collaborative models will be the new standard in healthcare.[4]

"Let's say you have a patient with diabetes and depression. If they're tremendously depressed, they're going to have a hard time checking their blood sugars, maintaining a log or being compliant with their medication," Dr. Brian Wong, medical director of population health at Accolade, said.

"This illustrates that physical and mental health have a symbiotic relationship and can't be treated separately."

How we implement the collaborative care model

Our team is comprised of primary care physicians, mental health specialists, nurses, care coordinators and psychiatrists.

Our healthcare experts actively manage physical and mental health holistically.

We maintain transparency in data. Clinical information is shared between a primary physician and a mental health therapist. There's visibility into treatment plans, such as prescribed medications and follow-up steps.

Seamless, easy access to virtual mental health therapy and physical care.
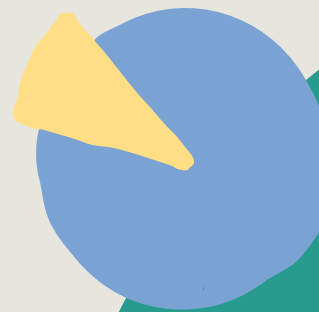
Early Results

Mental health concerns are identified within primary care. More than two-thirds of primary care patients are screened for depression.

Care is integrated and longitudinal: 72% of patients who seek therapy with us are managed by our primary care doctors and 73% of all mental health therapy sessions are repeat appointments.

Clinical outcomes improve: A 31% reduction in the PHQ-9 scores, (a method used to determine severity of mental health issues) has been reported between visits.

We share data with each provider and specialist we work with, from diagnoses and dates of treatment and therapy to prescribed medications and follow-up requirements for treatment plans. Mental health therapists work hand-in-hand with primary care physicians to address any need. This helps to create a seamless healthcare journey, making our collaborative care model an effective way to address healthcare needs and improve outcomes.
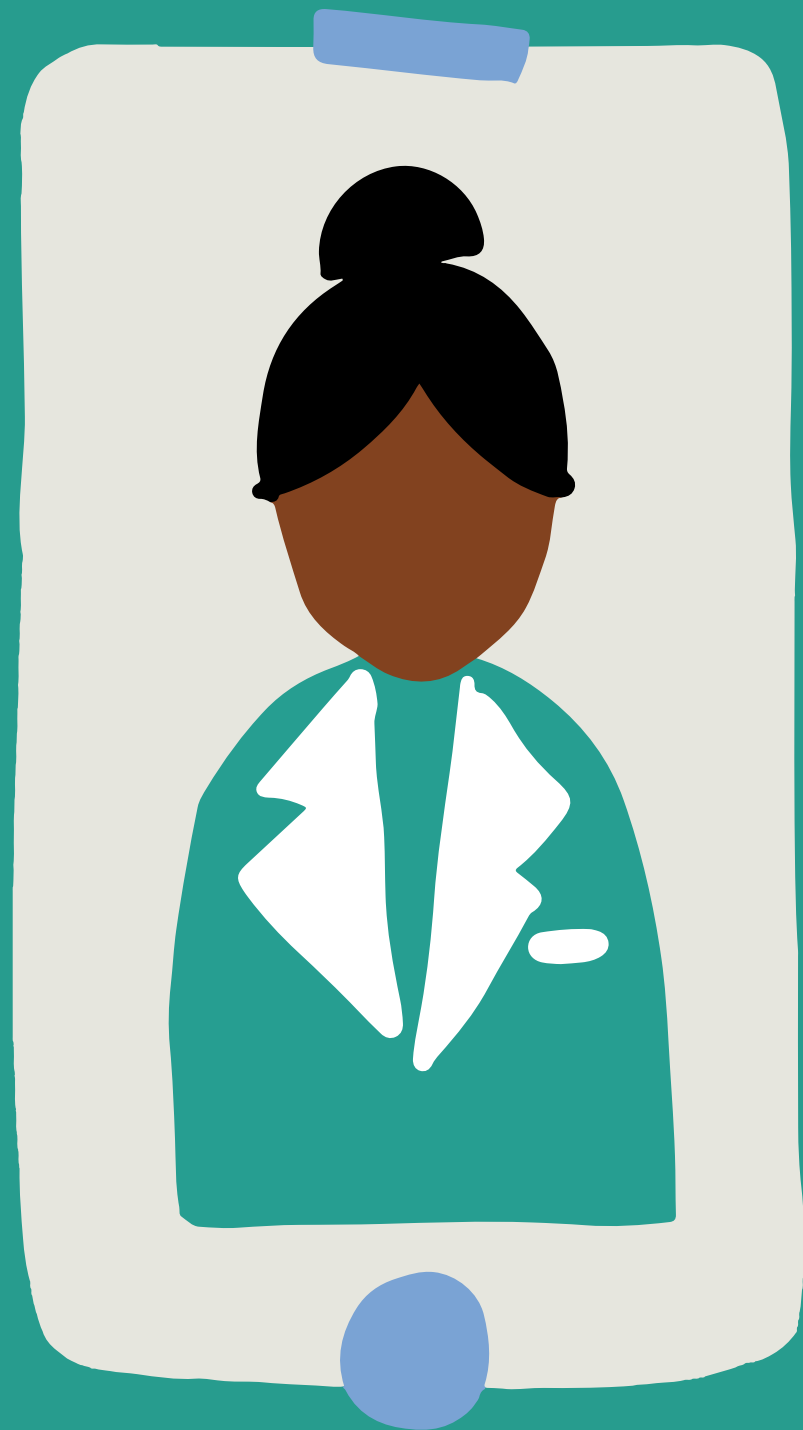
True virtual primary and mental health care

Accolade Care is a different approach to virtual primary and mental health care. It goes beyond traditional telemedicine, which tends to focus on urgent or episodic care. Instead, it's an improved experience built on a collaborative model that focuses on building long-term relationships between providers, specialists and the people they serve.

Demand for virtual care has increased — prior to the onset of the pandemic in 2019, 11% of people reported using virtual care. While COVID drove a surge in virtual visits, by 2020 76% of people said they're interested in using virtual care going forward.[5] This doesn't mean we're trying to replace traditional in-person care. Instead, we're supplementing it by allowing people to gain quick and easy access to a primary care physician, therapist or specialist.

60%
of patients avoid high cost ER or urgent care visits

<5%
of care can't be resolved with virtual care

On the phone or in the app gets you a same-day primary care appointment or 24/7 access to our Care Team

"*The virtual care I envision is one in which care is available where and when patients need it, is provided by someone they trust, and is seamlessly integrated with their overall healthcare.*"

Dr. Shantanu Nundy
Chief medical officer, Accolade
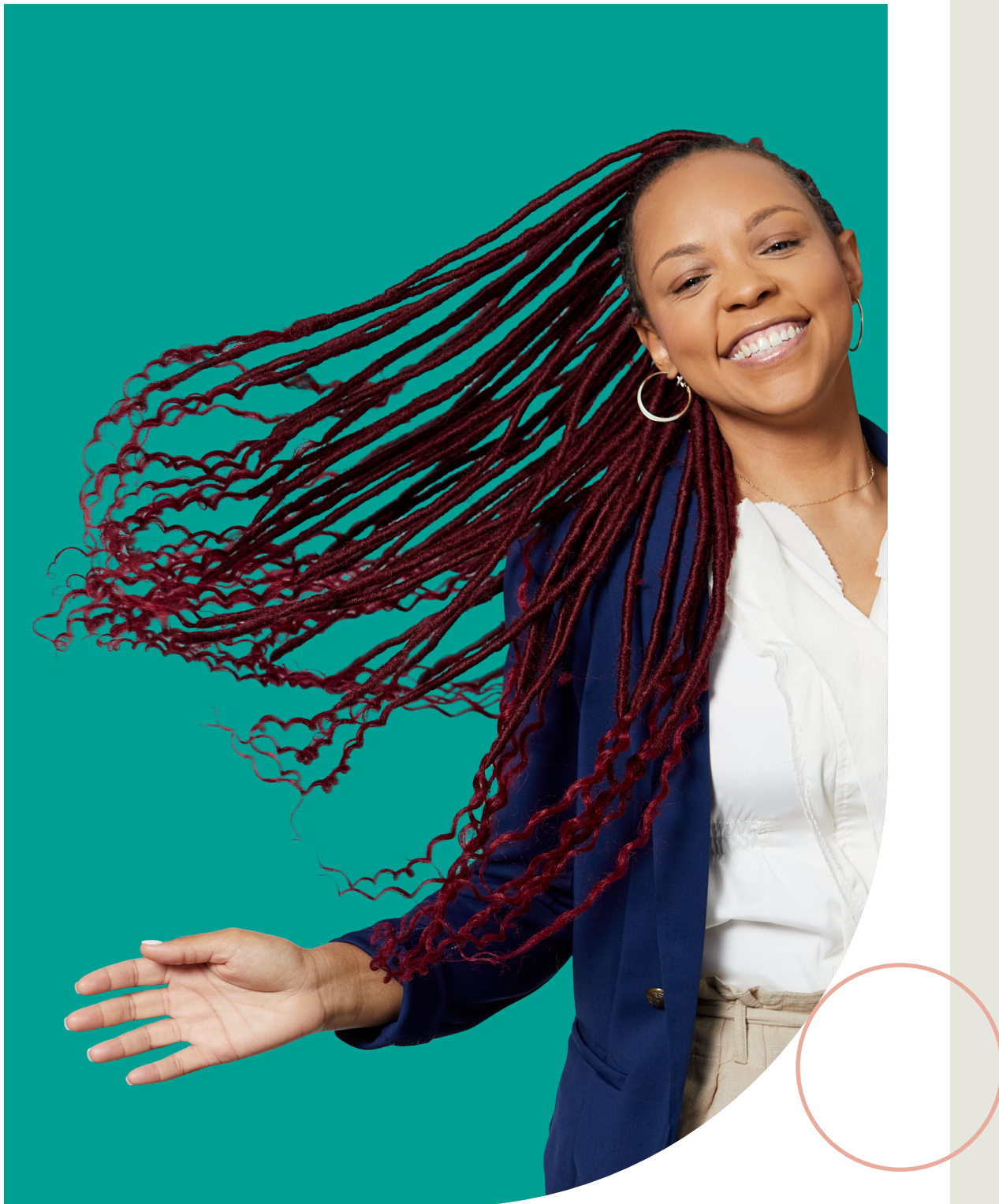
This solution helps people get the care they need as soon as they need it. There's no waiting weeks or months to speak with a physician and there's around-the-clock access to our Care Team. We help people understand their benefits when it comes to the care they need, prepare for appointments and get them to the right provider or specialist.

Accolade Care also meets people where they are. People's needs are constantly changing. These can be planned changes, like starting a family, or they can be unexpected, such as having a sudden onset of anxiety symptoms because of how the pandemic impacted day-to-day life.

By eliminating the walls between primary care physicians, mental health specialists and other specialists, we're able to help people where they are and within the context of their lives.

33%
Less spend for people who have a PCP than those that only see specialists

90%
Chronic disease spend more effectively managed by a PCP

75%
Savings with lower-cost prescriptions delivered via high-quality virtual primary care
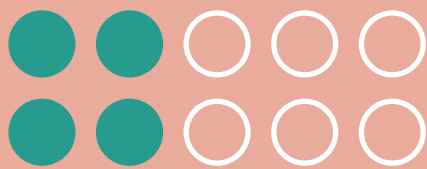
Virtual care isn't new.
Accolade's approach to it is.

In **1879**, the medical journal "The Lancet" advocated the use of the telephone to reduce unnecessary office visits.

In **1925**, "Science and Innovation" magazine put a doctor diagnosing a patient via radio on its cover.

During the **'60s**, NASA used telemedicine to monitor the health of its astronauts.

April 2020: McKinsey reports virtual care increased 78 times from February 2020.[6]

2021: Accolade Care launches, ushering in the future of true virtual primary and mental health care. With a collaborative, whole-person approach to diagnosis, treatment plans and follow-up care, Accolade Care breaks down silos in healthcare, embraces a holistic approach and uses innovative technology to thread together every aspect of care between providers, specialists and the people they help.

The expanding need for virtual primary and mental health care
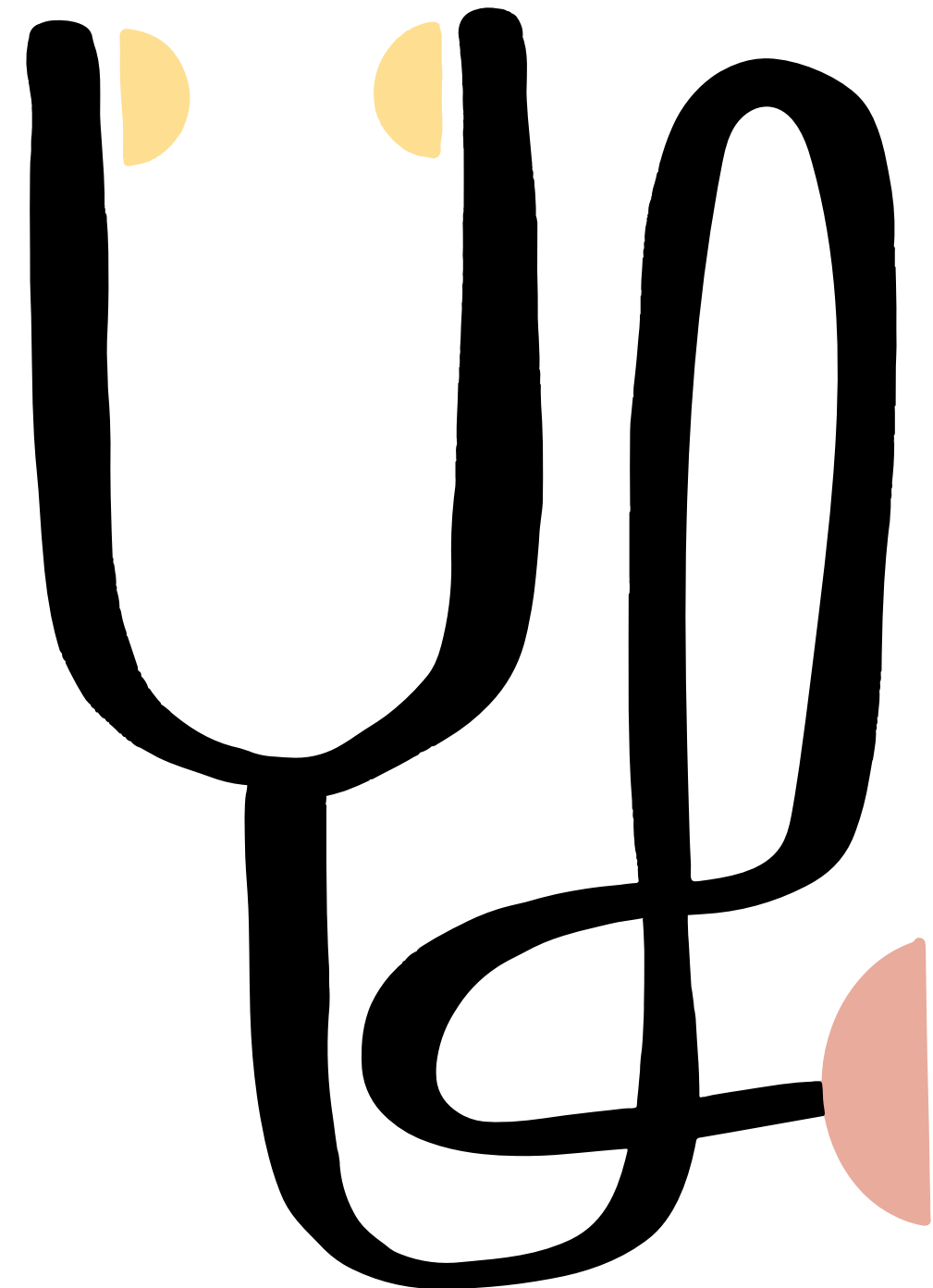
78%

increase in virtual healthcare February to April 2020

4 in 10

people avoided in-person care due to concerns about the pandemic

Demand for virtual care isn't dissipating — it increased 38x from pre-COVID baseline [10]

In the last decade there's been an increased concern over the number of available primary care physicians. The federal government estimates that 80% of rural America is "medically underserved,"[7] meaning that viable physical health care is more than 60 miles away. This figure contributes to the approximately 65 million people who live in what is termed "healthcare deserts."[8] This lack of access cuts across every segment of the population, impacting everyone from infants to the elderly.

Compounding matters is the fact that the amount of mental health providers is inadequate to meet people's needs. Long before COVID, there was a lack of mental health specialists, particularly in rural and low-income areas. In 2016, it was estimated that 11.8 million Americans needed mental health support that was not met while nearly 38% couldn't afford treatment.[9]

This unmet need hasn't dissipated: In June 2021, it was reported that an estimated 122 million Americans — 37% of the population — lived in nearly 6,000 areas that were lacking in mental health professionals. To close this gap, the U.S. would need an additional 6,398 mental health providers.[11]

With the onset of COVID, demand for mental health support has accelerated. Between January to June 2019, 11% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression. By January 2021, KFF reported that 41% of U.S. adults reported the same symptoms — a stunning increase of 30%.[12]

With people forced to stay in their homes and hesitant to seek out care, the pandemic accelerated the need for virtual care. People avoided in-person visits and needed an alternative way to manage their health. But what is undeniable is the increase in the number of people experiencing mental health issues that were a by-product of the pandemic. In a short period of time, demand and need for mental health support to help people manage their psychological well-being has never been greater.

Accolade Care reduced depression symptoms **31%**

"*One of the few positives we can garner from this pandemic is re-imagining the way people receive healthcare, specifically virtual care. Mental health providers had a head start. We've been able to learn from them to rapidly expand and operationalize virtual care during the pandemic. It's impossible to hypothesize what the long-term effects are going to be. What I can say is that what's important to address is expanding access to mental health and primary care.*"

Dr. Brian Wong
Medical director of population health, Accolade
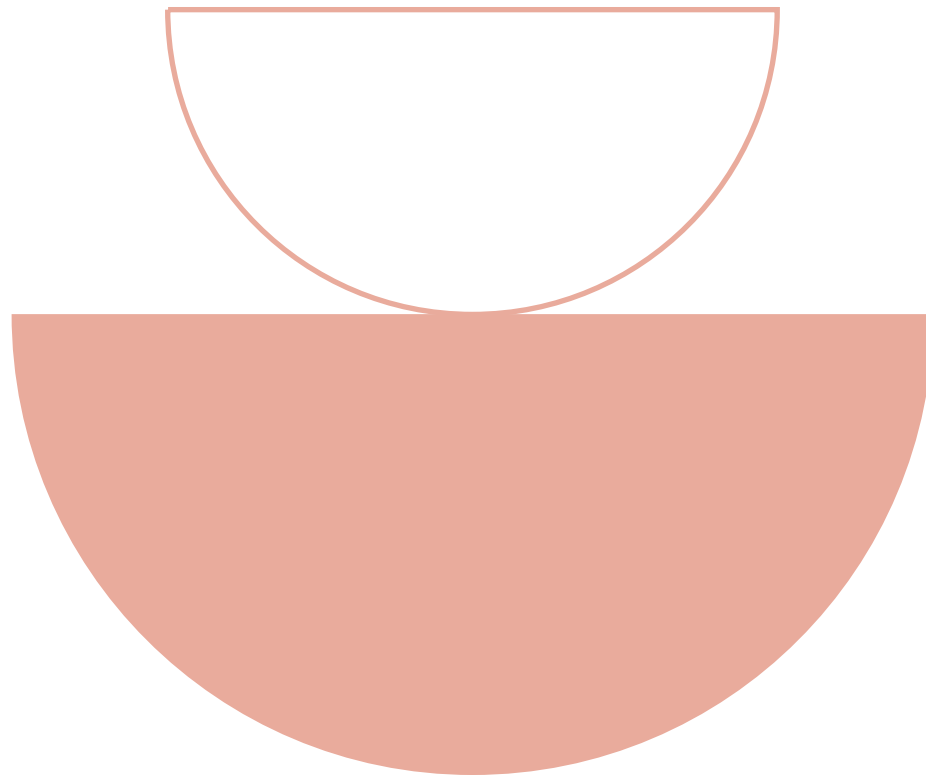
It's clear that COVID may have propelled the demand, and need, for virtual care, but it's also forced the healthcare system as a whole to expand its scope.

Healthcare — virtual or physical — can no longer be a stratified system. It can't focus on physical symptoms and mental health in separate veins. The divisions and layers that once separated physical health care from mental health wellness need to be eradicated. People need to be viewed, and treated, holistically.

Building a smart tech platform to deliver better healthcare solutions

Healthcare is a human experience and we believe that human connection improves health outcomes. One of the most important elements of our Personalized Healthcare category is our Care Team, who ensure there's a personal component in everything we do.

We live in a world of automation and bots, but we know only humans can provide care and personalized support. When someone has a deeply personal care need and emotions are running high, they don't want a bot trying to decipher what they're asking, guessing what they might need. We don't want that either.

Instead of automation and bots, we built a smart technology platform to help people, to assemble a 360° view of a person's healthcare journey. "Our data, combined with our team of experts, enables our ability to leverage virtual and in-person care," Nundy said.

Our Care Team, providers and specialists are interconnected, rather than siloed, and have access to a data platform with the most complete data set in the industry. This means that when someone has a healthcare need, whether it's trying to get in touch with a primary physician to diagnose a new problem, getting a prescription refilled or finding a mental health therapist, they're quickly connected with someone who has knowledge of their care options and other pertinent information at their fingertips to get them the care they need.

We challenge conventional wisdom to chart a course for the future

Virtual primary and mental health care are here to stay. The pandemic made it clear that people need access to care, wherever they are and whenever they need it. This is why Accolade Care is a viable healthcare model for now — and the future.
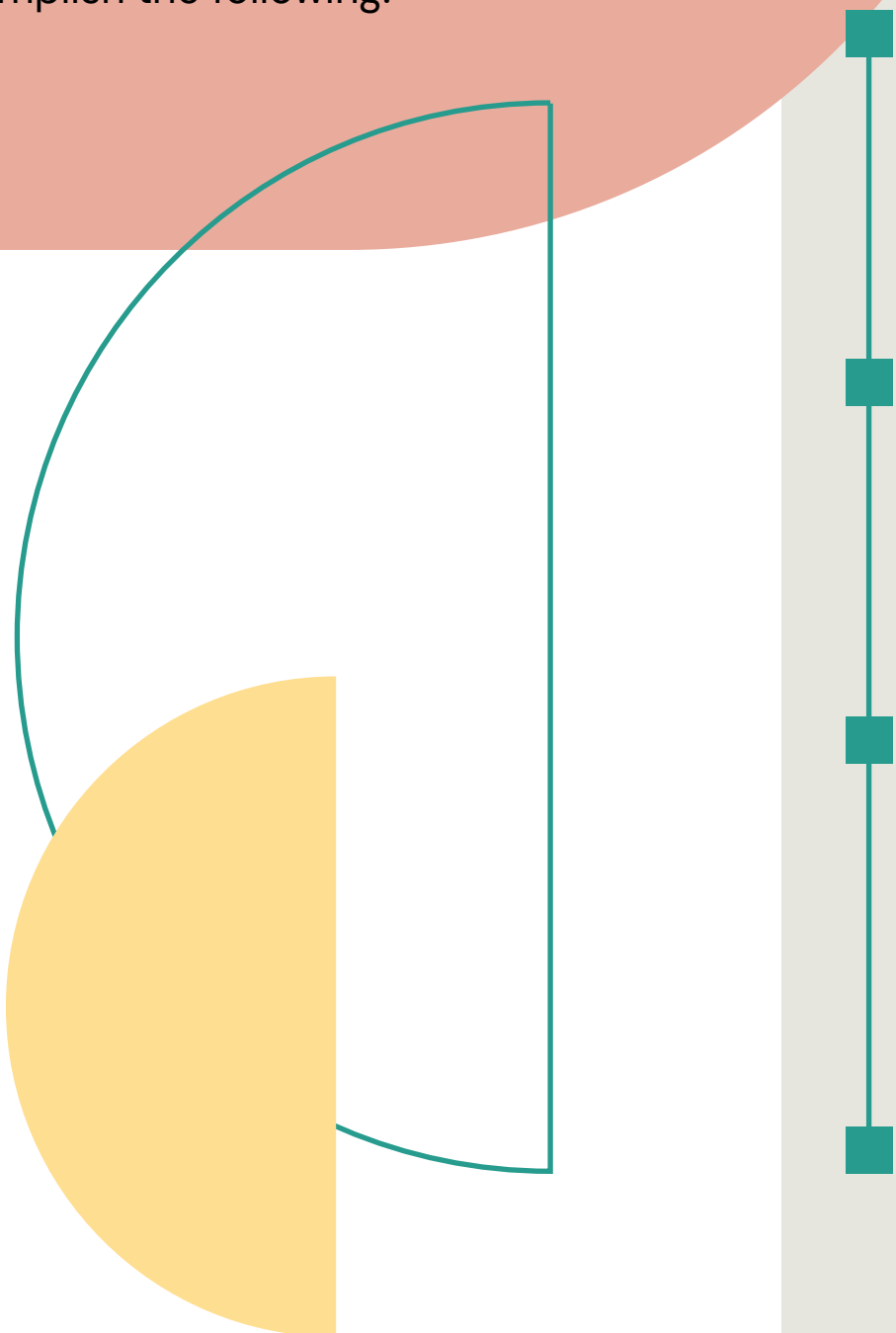
"Once I was issued a clinic iPhone and permitted to text message and FaceTime with my patients, I suddenly found myself keeping up with them more," Nundy said. Typically things were fine, he said, but being able to continuously contact patients "allowed me to course correct sooner than I would have otherwise."

Technology has enabled providers quicker and easier access to patients, and it's a two-way street: Technology also made it easier for patients to navigate the healthcare system, Nundy added.

While we focus on virtual care, we also don't advocate that in-person care will be fully replaced. There will always be a need for a provider who can set a broken bone, conduct certain diagnostic procedures like pap smears, biopsies and CT scans or perform a surgical procedure like a tonsillectomy.

What we're doing is taking the empirical knowledge of what we know healthcare has been and what it is and we're weaving that into our vision of how healthcare should be. We're taking decisive measures to accomplish the following:

Extend our primary care physicians to be part of our Care Team, leveraging their data, relationships and context to deliver an exceptional experience. We're creating a model where a primary care physician knows what medication you're taking and which doctors you've seen.

We collaborate. Our virtual-first, collaborative care model means that we get people the care they need, wherever they need it. We break down silos in healthcare by demonstrating a willingness to partner and collaborate with the existing ecosystem, rather than replacing it.

We're people who care about people. What makes us unique are the incredible human relationships our Care Team creates. Those relationships are powered by an unparalleled data set that breaks down the silos of healthcare information. This allows us to deliver a personalized healthcare experience that people love.

We validate our success by improving clinical outcomes. We put a premium on the value that's delivered to people and measure success by improving clinical outcomes for the people we serve.

The future of healthcare is here

One only needs to look at how organizations pivoted during the pandemic to see where healthcare can change: When the pandemic hit, 44% of workplaces went virtual — it only makes sense that healthcare followed suit.[13]

And, most importantly, healthcare needs to meet people where they're at, whether that means via a video or phone call, or in person.

Accolade Care is the future of healthcare — a virtual–first solution that looks at people holistically, meets them where they're at, breaks down silos between the care people need and incorporates a collaborative model that unifies physicians, mental health professionals and specialists to deliver the care every person deserves, wherever they are.

Welcome to the future — and welcome to what Accolade Care can offer your people and their families. Let's embark on this journey to new and better healthcare together.

Request a demo

> *"Virtual care shifts the frontline of care from the clinic to where a person is."*

Dr. Shantanu Nundy
Chief medical officer, Accolade

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