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# How Mercy is using technology to bring health care to the patient

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Can quality health care come at home, rather than the hospital?

Dr. Gavin Helton, president of clinical integration at Mercy Virtual, thinks so.

Helton in March assumed that role alongside Vance Moore. They share responsibility for Mercy's virtual care strategy, with Helton focusing on clinical care and Moore on operations.

Helton, a primary care physician, said the integration of virtual care is the next major step in restructuring care distribution.

Helton talked with the *Business Journal* during SingularityU St. Louis Chapter's first panel discussion on empowering communities with access to technology.



Dr. Gavin Helton, president of clinical integration at Mercy Virtual

## What does your job entail?

I represent Mercy's health system at Mercy Virtual, and we're leveraging technology to be able to bring the care to the patients, when and where they require it. It's in contrast to traditional health care which tends to be more provider and facility based. We're leveraging technology to bring the right level of care to the right patient at the right time.

## What kind of technology are you talking?

We're connected in the home with biometrics. We also do two-way audio/video. We have the ability through analytics to predict when patients are potentially going to decompensate and which patients require what level of care. One of the programs in particular is focused on complex, chronically ill patients. Those patients typically have continual needs, yet the traditional model cares for them episodically. Leveraging technology, we're preventing them from going back and forth into the hospital to receive care for their chronic condition and bringing the care to them in the home. We're reallocating traditional inpatient resources or hospital-based resources into the outpatient or ambulatory space.

## Is that more expensive?

It is costly, though ultimately there is significant value driven both to the patient from a quality of life standpoint as well as the health care system as a whole. Health care is moving towards a risk-based model, and health care systems are becoming increasingly more responsible for not only providing high-quality care but also the cost of that care. Mercy Virtual is Mercy's investment in that future model. It's a matter of maintaining the patient-centric care model that we've developed over the years and applying a consumer-centric operating model. As we leverage technology, we're bringing the care to the patients in a pro-active manner. By doing that we prevent unnecessary utilization, unnecessary deterioration in quality of life for the patients.

### **How is the health care market changing?**

It's a combination of consumerism, providing appropriate access to our patients. It's also a matter of consumer-centric in an environment that is increasingly more expensive to take care of patients and the shift of that cost to the provider and patients, and so Mercy Virtual is leveraging technology to lower that cost while improving access in quality. It's Mercy's investment to able to lead the health care system into that evolution of the new model of care.

**Brian Robbins**

Reporter

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