The Platform is the Prescription: Solving Fragmentation in Digital Health

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Over the past decade, health systems have embraced the call to digitize. Telehealth has surged. Digital health apps are everywhere, and wearable devices now track everything from heart rates to glucose levels to sleep patterns and dreams or whether you snore. But with every new innovation comes another login, another workflow, and another layer added to an already overburdened system.

The problem today isn't a shortage of innovation; we're rife with that. It's a lack of cohesion. Technology is everywhere, but too often, it's not working together. For hospitals under pressure to deliver value-based care, this fragmentation results in more noise, less clarity, and ultimately, missed opportunities to improve patient outcomes.

Fragmentation Isn't Just Frustrating – It's Costly

Most health systems are attempting to manage a patchwork of digital tools. One for remote monitoring, another for behavioral health, yet another for virtual visits. Many of these tools are excellent on their own, but in practice, they operate in isolation. When a physician has to log into five separate platforms just to care for one patient, they're not delivering coordinated care, they're navigating digital chaos.

That fragmentation comes at a steep price. A 2024 survey of over 900 health IT leaders found that outdated, poorly integrated systems cost U.S. healthcare nearly $8 billion annually in operational inefficiency. Broader studies estimate the toll of data fragmentation at around

$30 billion each year. Despite the growth of remote care tools, a recent AMA survey found that only 30% of physicians use remote patient monitoring (RPM) solutions. The primary barrier? These tools don't integrate well into existing workflows.

The problem isn't the technology. It's the fragmentation.

Why Infrastructure, Not More Apps, is the Answer

Imagine running a hospital without a facilities team. Each department installs its own lights, wires its own outlets, and maintains its own HVAC. That's the current state of digital health in many organizations today: powerful tools, but no shared infrastructure to tie them together.

What's needed is a true digital health framework – an operational platform that unifies disconnected, separate solution tools, aligns them with care models, and connects them to billing and reporting systems. Not just EHR integration, but true ecosystem integration.

From Pilots to Platforms

Health IT executives know the pattern well: a promising vendor is approved for a pilot, physicians are excited, and expectations run high. However, six months later, it remains a standalone tool with no scale, no workflow integration, lack of patient engagement and no ROI. Implementation proved more complex than expected, the data isn't reaching the right teams, and reimbursement remains unclear.

This model doesn't scale. Especially not as CMS continues to accelerate alternative payment models, expand digital quality measures, and tighten reporting requirements. To meet those demands, digital health must evolve from siloed tools to integrated programs.

Digital Health-as-a-Service: A Model for Scale

Some organizations are moving toward a model known as Digital Health-as-a-Service (DHaaS) – a framework that emphasizes the orchestration of services. Instead of managing dozens of vendor contracts individually, systems work with a single platform that curates, integrates, and operationalizes multiple digital health tools under one umbrella.

DHaaS reduces the burden on IT and clinical teams, supports faster implementations, and simplifies billing for programs like RPM, Remote Therapeutic Monitoring (RTM), and Chronic Care Management (CCM). It also enables targeted intervention: the right tool, delivered to the right patient, with consistent engagement and outcome tracking.

A Model That Works: Lessons from the VA

The Veterans Health Administration (VA) offers a powerful example of what a well-coordinated digital infrastructure can achieve when implemented effectively. The VA has integrated remote monitoring, behavioral health, secure messaging, and care team

workflows into a unified system that enables proactive outreach and care, even across vast rural populations. It's a massive and complex network – one that could have easily fractured without the right foundation. What sets the VA apart isn't just the technology; it's the deliberate and expert orchestration behind it. Patients aren't simply handed devices and left on their own; they're supported by a digitally connected care plan, monitored and optimized over time to ensure meaningful management and better outcomes.

This approach has achieved what point solutions alone cannot. It's created a platform that enables equity, scalability, and sustainability.

What to Look for in a Platform-First Strategy

Health systems considering a shift to a platform model should look for infrastructure that connects care, rather than complicates care delivery. It should include:

- Open APIs and interoperability standards
- Multi-vendor flexibility with curated toolsets
- Built-in CMS billing and documentation support
- Engagement tools that personalize outreach
- Normalized data across disparate sources

Most importantly, the platform must ease the burden on clinicians, not add to it.

The Next Step for Health IT Leaders

As the industry continues its shift toward outcomes-based care, tools that operate in isolation will become obsolete. The future belongs to platforms that enable coordination, support reimbursement, and actively engage patients.

For CIOs and digital health leaders, the mandate is clear: move beyond investing in fragmented solutions and invest in cohesive, interoperable infrastructure. The path forward isn't more dashboards, it's clarity.

The answer isn't to add another point solution. It's to build the platform that brings them all together.