

Riding the Wave of Increased Telehealth Demand, Walgreens Expands Its Offerings to Include Dermatology



If you play a word association game with “Walgreens” and “skin care,” you

might end up at “sunscreen.” But thanks to a recent deal between the drugstore chain and [Iagnosis](#) (and its flagship product [DermatologistOnCall](#)), the most apropos word in that equation is “telehealth.”

Walgreens Boots Alliance has announced an expansion of its telehealth offerings to include dermatology services. For \$59, customers can visit with a skin specialist via video consultation.

Through its connection with the telehealth firm MDLive, the drugstore chain presently offers patients remote access to physicians through their computers, tablets, and smartphones. Mental health services are also lined up, and dermatology will be the newest addition to Walgreens’ telehealth roster.

Acknowledging the growing need for virtual medicine, Walgreens tackles the “health is skin-deep” mindset

Dr. Harry Leider is chief medical officer for Walgreens. “The teledermatology offering and collaboration is a natural extension of some of the services we already provide and can serve as a resource for screening and potential early diagnosis of a variety of skin conditions,” he said. Online skin care consultations will come in at \$59 each.

The American Skin Association estimates that there are 100 million people in the country suffering from diseases of the skin, including cancer. According to the market research firm I.H.S., 85% of those individuals can receive service from teledermatology. I.H.S. further reports that the total number of “specialty care” virtual consultations in the U.S. for 2015 was around 15.5 million. That figure is expected to increase by 8% each year, which speaks to the convenience and comfort remote health services offer patients.

And beyond the understandable appeal for patients, telehealth in the field is shown to be useful as well.

Remote access to physicians in the field of dermatology can be an effective diagnostic tool

“Teledermatology has proven to be almost as effective as face-to-face visits in diagnosing conditions,” I.H.S. medical technology analyst Roegen Roashan said in an interview. “Access is obviously extended with virtual consults.”

It’s no wonder, then, that dermatology in particular is making great strides in the remote-access arena.

Often patients postpone issue-driven visits to the doctor due to difficulty in scheduling or because of a level of discomfort about describing sensitive or worrisome issues. Getting a diagnosis without having to physically be present in the physician’s office is a real plus for many. The telehealth cost, too, is likely to be appealing, since it is lower than the average traditional doctor’s visit.



Teladoc is one of the country's largest telehealth companies. Spokesperson Patty Sullivan said: "In 2015, Teladoc saw approximately 25,000 dermatological visits and we're projecting double-digit growth in 2016 and are on pace to grow more than 60% this year."

Walgreens' website advertises the telehealth dermatology services as providing answers to more than 3,000 skin-condition questions by offering a connection with its online network of board-certified dermatologists. The website states:

"It's never been easier to get a dermatologist's opinion! Simply upload photos of your skin condition, and you'll receive a diagnosis, treatment plan and necessary prescriptions within three business days."

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