



Case Study

Progressive Therapeutics: *The importance of Telehealth Security*

Averaging 4,500 telehealth encounters per month, Progressive Therapeutics has not had a single security lapse or data breach in the eight years it has been using Azalea's EHR and integrated telehealth solution.

About Progressive Therapeutics

Progressive Therapeutics in Framingham, Massachusetts, provides psychiatric care for patients in the greater Metrowest area of the Bay State. It has nine licensed mental health professionals on staff, all committed to providing thorough delivery of psychiatric care based on the latest research

The practice was an early adopter of telehealth back in 2010, implementing it as a way to care for people unable to attend in-person sessions. At first, caregivers were using WebEx and Google Hangouts. These apps got the job done, but they were disjointed. Staff would have to juggle multiple windows between the EHR and the video call; it wasn't a smooth operation. Nor was it HIPAA-compliant, a major concern.

"The HIPAA waivers for telehealth implemented during the pandemic were critical for the widespread adoption of telehealth," said Dr. Nimish Shah, cofounder of Progressive Therapeutics. "But security can't be an afterthought in healthcare, even with telehealth."



Partnering with Azalea Health

Progressive Therapeutics found vendor Azalea Health, which offered a proposal for an EHR solution that came fully integrated with telehealth. "The solution was very user-friendly from the start, and Azalea was very hands-on in helping us train our staff on how to use it," Dr. Shah recalled. "They also helped us customize the layout of the platform to suit our workflows. We use telehealth for both initial and follow-up sessions for diagnosis and psychiatric medication management."

Azalea allows you to start a telehealth session directly from the patient's chart, being very convenient, allowing caregivers to manage scheduling, billing, coding and documentation from the same screen as the video player.

"Having to juggle multiple windows at once can be disruptive to the flow of conversations with patients as it diverts providers' attention from the patient," Shah said. "Azalea's cloud-based platform also makes it easy for providers to dial into calls with patients from anywhere, which was huge when COVID-19 started and we had to minimize our time in the office."

The analytics and reporting give staff full visibility into finances and revenue. This has been critical to the financial stability of the practice over the years. "Support teams have been consistent in helping us with telehealth billing and reimbursement best practices, especially when the regulations changed with COVID-19," he added. "Azalea's EHR is not only integrated with telehealth but also their revenue cycle management software, which makes it easier to bill more and resolve claims faster."



The Importance of Security

Telehealth has become the bedrock to Progressive Therapeutics' practice, especially since the pandemic started. Healthcare is one of the biggest targets for cybercriminals, alongside the government and the financial services industry. Unsecure telehealth connections can open the door for fraud, phishing and ransomware attacks, with serious reputational and financial consequences.

"Providers and patients alike have now seen the benefits of telehealth, and it's hard to imagine it going away," he said. "Telehealth is going to be a regular component of care moving into the future; patients are going to expect to have the option available. So we need to adapt and treat it like the long-term care option that it is, and that means making sure patients' privacy and data are secure."

Cybercriminals are getting more sophisticated and savvy the longer providers use telehealth, so there's no time to delay in securing telehealth operations, he advised.

"Last year, ransomware attacks cost the healthcare industry \$20.8 billion in downtime costs, affecting 600 practices nationwide," Shah noted. "The average healthcare organization spends \$1.4 million to recover from a cyberattack. Many smaller practices like ours operate on razor-thin margins and can't afford the costs of a cyberattack."

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