

# EXPANDING ACCESS TO CARE

Addressing health inequities with robust  
community partnerships and technologies

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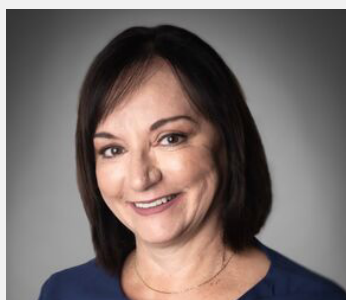


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# FOREWORD

As a healthcare industry, we are at a pivotal moment as the mounting need to access quality care intersects with unprecedented strains on our health systems. We hear about it every day: that healthcare is in crisis, fueled by growing staff shortages and rising costs.

At the heart of this challenge lies a profound commitment to ensuring that every individual, regardless of circumstance, has a fundamental right to quality care. Behind every statistic is someone grappling with illness, uncertainty and the profound desire for compassionate support. It is a stark reminder of the human stakes involved.

While health systems contend with surging demand, the need for innovative solutions and partnerships has never been more pressing. No single entity can solve these complex challenges. But together we can make the greatest impact of all. Time has come to rethink how and where care is delivered. Systemic change will allow us to act on this crisis today, while creating a healthier, more equitable tomorrow.



**Jeff DiLullo**  
*Chief Region Leader*  
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# INTRODUCTION

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right. Our vision at Philips is to provide better care for more people. To achieve this vision, we must first acknowledge the diverse needs and challenges of our communities. Working directly with underserved populations and local partners helps address culturally specific health issues, while fostering understanding, trust and collaboration.

But the journey toward accessible care does not end there. Technology offers transformative tools that enhance patient experiences, unlock efficiencies and

empower clinicians to perform at the highest levels. From telemedicine to AI-driven diagnostics, technology is driving new opportunities to overcome barriers and improve patient outcomes.

Tapping into the expertise of healthcare leaders doing the work for underserved communities, let's explore strategies to improve care access. By combining community-led collaboration and forward-thinking technology, we can address challenges at the root and help to create a more equitable future for everyone.



## CHAPTER 1

# AN ISSUE OF ACCESS

The Philips Future Health Index (FHI) 2024 report, an annual global study of almost 3,000 healthcare leaders, revealed sobering findings about access to quality care – including the challenges that are having a disproportionate effect on underserved communities. Only by working closely with these leaders, health systems and local organizations can we more fully understand these challenges and work to overcome them.

## STAFF SHORTAGES

More than 8 in 10 of U.S. healthcare leaders report that patient care delays are an issue, resulting in longer wait times for appointments or reduced time with patients. Underserved communities face the most acute impact, with almost half of U.S. healthcare leaders reporting a decreased capacity to meet their needs. And the problem is only going to get worse, as the latest projections indicate that the U.S. will face a shortage of as many as 86,000 clinicians by 2036.

***“We have incredibly talented, dedicated clinicians working in the field, but there are simply not enough to meet the demand. This is happening not just in under-resourced community hospitals, but at some of the best academic medical centers in the world.”***

**Jeff DiLullo**

Chief Region Leader for Philips North America



## GEOGRAPHICAL CHALLENGES

The U.S. Government Accountability Office revealed that more than 101 rural hospitals closed between 2013 and 2020. This makes up 4% of all rural facilities across the United States, with patients now traveling 20 miles farther for common services. Once again, this puts those living in underserved communities – in particular, rural areas – at higher risk of missing essential care.

Access to maternity care is also decreasing in the parts of the U.S. that need it the most. Today, more than half of U.S. rural counties offer no or very limited access to maternity care. There are 2.2 million women of childbearing age living in maternity care deserts.





***“We ran a focus group and discovered that sepsis patients who spoke English as a second language stayed for much longer and had much higher readmission rates. They said that language barriers made it harder for them to understand their diagnosis.”***

**Whitney Haggerson**

Vice President of Health Equity and Medicaid  
at Providence

### LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Ethnically diverse areas are more likely to face delays in accessing care due to language barriers. According to a recent KFF Survey on Racism, Discrimination, and Health, about half of immigrant adults in the U.S. have limited English proficiency (LEP), meaning they speak English less than very well. Related data found that those with LEP are almost twice as likely as their English-proficient counterparts to report fair or poor health status.

### DIGITAL DIVIDES

U.S. health leaders acknowledge that innovations such as virtual care can contribute to a growing digital divide. This includes not only access to technology, but the skills to use it. A 2022 study conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Health Policy revealed those least likely to benefit from video-enabled telehealth services were older adults, minorities and people with lower levels of education and income.

The challenge for healthcare leaders is to break down these barriers to access. The following pages include strategies to do just that, through innovative partnerships and technology.



## CHAPTER 2

# PARTNERING TO PROVIDE BETTER CARE FOR MORE PEOPLE

In pursuit of a healthier, more equitable future, partnerships are crucial. A collaborative approach allows health systems to design culturally competent interventions and gain insights into the nuances that shape health behaviors – ultimately improving access to care.

## OPERATIONALIZING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For some healthcare leaders, the need for community collaboration is not only important, it is a business imperative. Healthcare leaders are operationalizing community engagement to improve healthcare access. This includes leveraging partnerships and promoting better awareness of health conditions. California-based Sutter Health Institute for Advancing Health Equity established partnerships with a community health clinic in East Oakland to identify care needs for COVID-19 patients.

Executive Director Kristen M.J. Azar, Ph.D., R.N., MSN/MPH, FAHA, says: “We know that access to high-quality care is one of the social drivers of health. One of the ways we have been able to address that is through our partnership with Roots Community Health Clinic. We deployed six registered nurses and environmental service workers, which increased testing in the area.”

In the city of Buffalo, NY, the incidence of lung cancer is about 35% higher than the statewide rate. Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center engages community organizations and cross-sector partners as a joint task force to bring potentially life-saving lung cancer screening to patients. In 2022, the task force launched Eddy – “Early Detection Driven to You” – lung cancer



***“We have chosen community engagement as a key strategic priority. We have developed resource-sharing partnerships, working with faith-based institutions, local and state agencies, schools, universities, parks and neighborhood associations.”***

**Yvens Laborde, Ph.D.**

Chief Community Medical Officer of Ochsner Health



***“As a small staff division within the HSS, we work with federal and industry partners. These deliver affordable, accessible, high-quality and cost-effective primary healthcare services to medically underserved communities.”***

**Micky Tripathi, Ph.D., MPP**

National Coordinator For Health Information Technology



screening on wheels and the only mobile unit of its kind in the country. Eddy is outfitted with the latest edition Philips Incisive CT to bring screenings outside of hospitals and into communities, meeting people where they live, work and pray.

#### **BUILDING NEW CAPABILITIES**

By collaborating closely with those who are delivering healthcare at the local level, health systems can help communities build new capabilities. In rural Georgia, the Emory School of Nursing, the Ellenton Clinic and Philips support the healthcare needs of a community of seasonal farmworkers. This partnership brings critical healthcare services directly to the farmworkers.

Using Philips' technologies, such as the Lumify portable ultrasound, healthcare workers are able to identify conditions that otherwise might have been missed to get patients the care they need.

Similarly, Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services is engaging strategic partners to ensure that all pregnant residents in their state have access to the best healthcare possible. The department partners with Philips to provide the Philips Avent Pregnancy+ app to Medicaid-eligible families – offering critical health

information and local resources to expectant mothers at a time when maternal mortality rates, especially for underserved communities, are concerning.

Through partnerships, even smaller teams like the one at the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology can make a big difference. Their Health Center Program funds nearly 1,400 health centers and collectively operates more than 15,000 delivery sites.

#### **STEERING STRATEGIC DECISIONS**

Looking forward, partnerships between health systems and local organizations can be game changers for data-driven healthcare equity. These collaborations unlock unique data sets that can inform strategic decisions and targeted interventions for communities in need.

Debbie Salas-Lopez, M.D., MPH, Senior Vice President of Community and Population Health at Northwell Health, reiterates this, adding that their organization's own KPIs have helped to improve access to care. She says, “We are using data including a Social Vulnerability Index, clinical data, and COVID positivity rates. This helps us identify underserved communities and their unmet needs to better inform our initiatives.”



## CHAPTER 3

# TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN ACCESSIBLE CARE



Increasingly, healthcare leaders are turning to innovative technologies, to unlock efficiencies, empower clinicians and patients and improve access to care.

## ADOPTING AI-DRIVEN AUTOMATION

Almost 9 in 10 healthcare leaders agree that automation to reduce repetitive tasks and processes will be critical for addressing staff shortages in healthcare, according to the FHI 2024 report. By moving away from tedious administrative tasks, teams can spend more time with patients and handle an ever-growing caseload.

For example, ONC leverages AI-driven clinical support tools like risk calculators and deterioration indices that consider race and ethnicity. These serve to optimize care delivery, reduce bias, and empower clinicians to spend more time with patients and practice at the top of their license.

## EXTENDING CARE TO REMOTE ENVIRONMENTS

Telemedicine has progressed in leaps and bounds since the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted by Michael Ruma, M.D., MPH, Maternal-Fetal Medicine/Perinatologist at the Perinatal Associates of New Mexico, which touches 40% of all pregnancies in New Mexico. Using Philips Collaboration Live for tele-ultrasound remote access, Dr. Ruma and his team can deliver high-quality diagnostic services to underserved areas and healthcare deserts, significantly reducing the need for high-risk patients to travel long distances. Says Dr. Ruma, "Technology will never replace humans, but it helps us serve patients far more efficiently."

## EMPOWERING PATIENTS WITH TECHNOLOGY

The health ecosystem relies not only on prescriptions and treatments but on patients' ability to monitor their own conditions and prevent unnecessary hospitalization. Even in areas where broadband is scarce, people can rely on social media or mobile apps to get useful medical information.

***"At Philips, we see AI as a tool for making providers' lives easier and driving impactful solutions at scale, so they have more time to spend with their patients in pursuit of better health outcomes."***

**Jeff DiLullo**

Chief Region Leader for Philips North America

At Providence, the teams use tools such as social media to communicate their insights to underserved communities. Haggerson says, “We began to notice higher rates of colorectal cancer, diabetes, and hypertension among Black church communities. We wanted to communicate this, so we thought about how we could partner with influencers. It’s unlikely that these communities will follow Providence on social media. But if they follow a popular and respected reverend, they can find out about screening from somebody they trust.”

Likewise, teams at Ochsner Health recognize the power of digital channels to increase awareness. Dr. Laborde says, “We work hard to ensure that our projects are cocreated and use the communities’ channels to increase awareness via their places of worship, social media, radio, and television.” When technology can be used considerably to connect patients, providers and health information, it can be truly transformative.

***“Our ability to do virtual visits and remote monitoring holds a great deal of promise. For example, we use our Connected Mom program to monitor pregnant mothers for blood pressure and other concerns. This detects problems in pregnancy earlier, preventing poor outcomes, especially for vulnerable people with high-risk social factors.”***

**Yvens Laborde, Ph.D.**

Chief Community Medical Officer of Ochsner Health





# CONCLUSION

Healthcare in the U.S. is in crisis, embattled by staff shortages, rising costs and the growing demands of aging populations. With fewer resources, healthcare leaders are struggling to meet the needs of patients on a systemic level – let alone the needs of underserved communities. The time has come to urgently reconsider healthcare delivery models with the aid of collaborative partnerships and innovative technologies that help bring better care for more people.

We have seen firsthand the transformative impact of these strategies. Our conversations and research demonstrate healthcare leaders' dedication to overcoming challenges to access. Their insights revealed a clear vision for a future where technology and patient-centric care models play pivotal roles in paving the way for a more accessible, effective, resilient and sustainable healthcare system.

With cutting-edge technology already and increasingly available, the healthcare community must forge bold, dynamic partnerships across sectors to deliver real, measurable outcomes. The future of healthcare rests in our ability to unlock the full potential of these partnerships – uniting resources and expertise to deliver maximum impact where it matters most and improve lives for generations to come.

