

TELUS bridges silos to expand healthcare in Canada and far beyond

By Annie Turner

Who: Canada's TELUS

What: Fulfilling its vision of patient-friendly access to healthcare around the world

How: TELUS invested over CAD\$3 billion in the sector over the last decade, developing a platform-based approach that aims to connect the entire health ecosystem, leveraging its technology, team and health professionals to deliver better health experiences

Results: TELUS contributes to better health outcomes for 12 million Canadians with a 92% client satisfaction rating and clients reporting 101% increase in overall quality of life: it is leveraging TM Forum events to expand its international footprint and has moved into three international markets.

More than a decade ago, TELUS took the strategic decision to leverage its networks, technology, innovation and team members to tackle the many challenges facing healthcare systems. Today TELUS reaches 12 million patients in Canada with its virtual care services, more than any other provider in the country.

TELUS Health services integrates pharmacy management, electronic medical records (EMRs), personal health records, clinical information systems, remote patient monitoring, virtual care for both physical and mental health, and point of care claims settlement management.

The CSP used the platform approach to bridge the many data and operational silos: With each phase of growth, TELUS had to address the needs of the many different stakeholders across the ecosystem to ensure the secure delivery of vital but confidential patient data across the continuum.

The communications service provider (CSP) faced numerous challenges in building and growing its health business but gained many insights along the way. Perhaps the most valuable is that the secure exchange of data is the golden thread that runs through all kinds of healthcare.

Sustainable exchange of data

TELUS learned that the best way to do this sustainably is through electronic exchanges. Armed with this knowledge, the CSP built the Omara Health Exchange, a digital health platform that enables a marketplace of trusted and interoperable health, wellness and betterment solutions.

This platform-based business and operational model is particularly apt for healthcare which is delivered via many parties: Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, chiropractors, other health practitioners and insurers are involved in patients' care, including wellness – the prevention of disease (see infographic below).

The Omara Health Exchange seeks to reduce the friction previously inherent in health care by providing a platform that enables interoperability between devices, applications and solutions, so customers can build or scale health businesses and improve health outcomes in their local markets.

The Omara Health Exchange is much a product of TELUS' experience at bridging the gaps in healthcare in Canada. Its purpose is to engage a community of consumers and providers of these solutions, enable discovery of services, facilitate access to them, and ease the exchange of services between them.

International expansion

Companies in four countries have collectively onboarded 330,000 employees onto the Omara Health Exchange, and it is being used in a variety of ways.

In Mexico a TELUS healthcare partner recently used the exchange to orchestrate employees' safe return to work after lockdowns.

In the Philippines, TELUS has partnered with a leading service provider to create a health and wellness solution that provides virtual consultations, wellness programs and supporting products delivered to the door. The growth of consumer-funded health services signals a global movement where citizens are taking healthcare decisions into their own hands.

In Australia, the platform will support Telstra's existing portfolio of solutions but will enable it to become more operationally efficient from an IT perspective. It will shorten time to market and enable Telstra to better leverage the huge data repositories and registries it built up over the years.

"Many of the lessons we have learned in Canada can be shared to help other countries navigate the complexities of digital health and we recognize there is a wealth of insights that we can bring back to Canada. Digital health is an exciting space because it represents a powerful economic development opportunity for each country as innovation emerges in the face of necessity. We're honoured to cultivate a trusted ecosystem that enables the global exchange of experiences and solutions". - Susan Wooldridge Executive Director, Global Health Solutions at TELUS.

New revenue streams

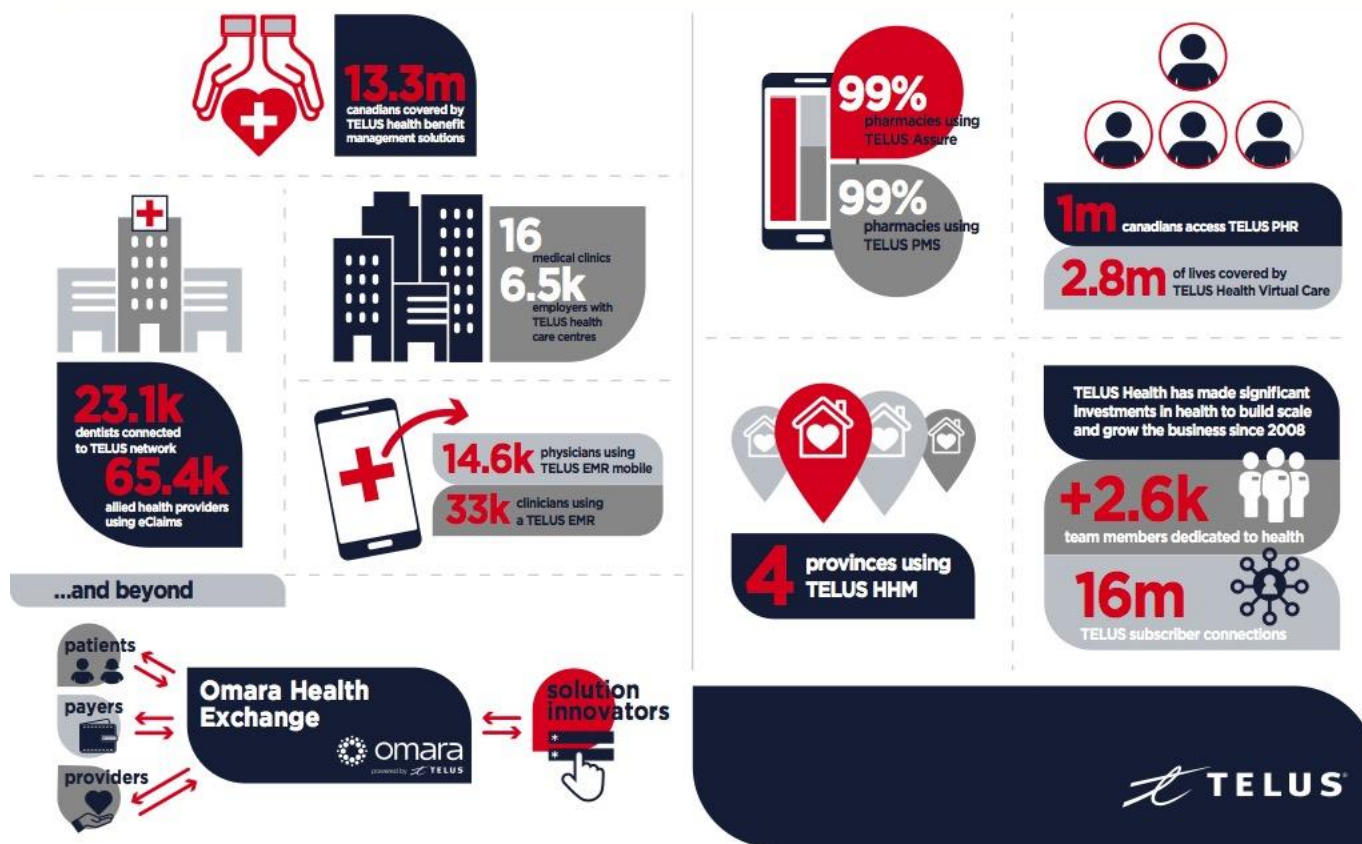
Expansion into healthcare has diversified TELUS' activities and revenues beyond traditional telco verticals and into a new industry. The Omara Health Exchange has enabled it to expand globally and transform healthcare for millions around the globe.

TELUS' platform approach to health benefits CSP customers by enabling them to set up their own health ecosystems efficiently, which reduces their costs and time to market.

Results

The infographic below sums up TELUS Health's reach in Canada (as of Feb 2021).

TELUS Health's reach in Canada...



To measure the impact of its Canadian programs, TELUS conducted a Home Health Monitoring program which found:

92% client satisfaction

101% increase in overall quality of life

CAD\$3,800 (US\$3,037) to CAD\$12,500 cost savings from personal health records (PHR)

89% see value in having access to a PHR

86% said access to a PHR will result in improved health

83% said access to a PHR helps them better manage health issues

Responding to the pandemic

In 2020 as the pandemic spread, TELUS experienced surging demand for virtual care in Canada and ramped up its virtual care offerings and integrated its virtual care solution, Akira by TELUS Health, with its electronic medical records. The solution helps provide more informed primary care, as critical information about patients' health

appearing on a single medical chart. Patients using the Akira by TELUS Health virtual care platform through their employee benefits programs receive better continuity of care.

In particular, provision of virtual sessions has proved a boost to mental health, which has shot up the agenda during the pandemic. “You're also avoiding the potential stigma, real or perceived, of being seen going into a psychologist’s office. It’s removed a barrier to getting care and having access to it in your home, or wherever you're comfortable. This is a huge asset to patients,” says Mariane St-Maurice, Senior Corporate Marketing Manager at TELUS Health.

Leveraging TM Forum events

To realize its vision of connecting like-minded organizations through a common purpose, TELUS needs to be informed and inform others. TM Forum’s thought-leadership channels, such as the Digital Transformation World Series, have proved extremely valuable in helping TELUS stay abreast of emerging health trends and technologies around the world. At the same time, they have provided a successful way of meeting potential ecosystem partners that it can work with to shape healthcare in Canada and globally.

In 2020, TELUS sponsored a Virtual Digital Leadership Summit for Southeast Asian members to highlight healthcare opportunities for telcos and especially how telcos are equipped to champion interoperability in healthcare. At the summit, TELUS’ partners – Telstra, America Movil, and Canada Health Infoway – spoke about their experiences navigating digital transformation and harnessing the power of exchanges.

“It gives us the opportunity to present the digital healthcare story in a meaningful way, in the context of the telco industry pressures and capabilities. As a mechanism to reach new audiences and expand visibility for our brand outside of ‘just’ being a Canadian telco, the TM Forum event was really valuable,” concludes Wooldridge.