

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

VIRTUAL CARE

SUPPORTING MEMBERS THROUGHOUT THE PATIENT JOURNEY WITH DR. VALERIA CAMPOZANO



Dr. Valeria Campozano is from Ecuador and is now based in the U.S., where she forms part of the clinical team. We spoke to her to find out more about her views on virtual care, and how it can improve the member experience.

Valeria, thank you for talking to us today. Please could you tell us a bit about your role at Cigna?

I'm a primary care physician with a Master in Healthcare Administration. I'm currently working with Cigna as a Medical Advisor at Cigna in North America. I'm part of the Clinical team, with other physicians, nurses, and care coordinators. Our job is to assist our members with their healthcare, ranging from ultrasounds to major surgery. We also interact with the providers in order to better understand patient care plans, from prior to admission until the day of discharge, anticipating the needs for our members for their recovery.

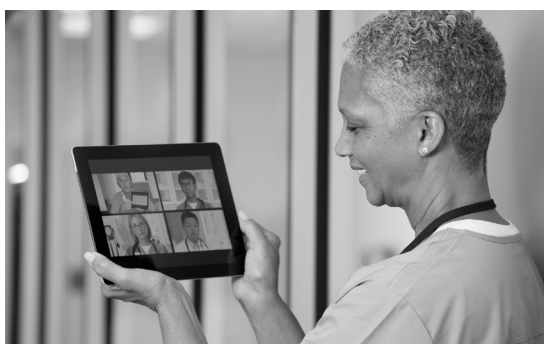
What is it about your job that you most enjoy?

The opportunity to learn how healthcare is managed around the world, and to be able to see not only our differences but also the similarities across treatments, whether a service is being delivered in Malaysia or in Ecuador.

How do you interact with members on a day-to-day basis?

As part of the North America team, my job is to deliver affordable, predictable, and simple assistance for our members who are currently expatriated in different parts of the world. My main task is to make sure that our members are receiving the best care possible, at the appropriate time, and in the correct place. They can be very far from home while on assignment, so our main purpose is to ensure that all their medical needs are covered, by offering them support from the initial treatment right the way through to their full recovery.

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At the recent Wellbeing Insights Forum, you mentioned how telehealth and in-person consultations can be combined to offer optimum services. How do you think the two can be used together?

Telemedicine is not something new, that's important to remember. For years we have been trying to integrate virtual care into the healthcare equation. We started

with remote assistance on surgeries, second opinions, or even joint consultations between colleagues from different hospitals.

“What we expected to happen in the next five to 10 years happened in six months.”

Over the course of the pandemic, we started to see the importance of telehealth as a way to keep in touch and maintain contact with our patients. We have come to the conclusion that these services are integrated, especially when it comes to primary care. We are the user’s initial step into the health system. It’s now more important than ever not to lose that opportunity with our patients, to do those first consults online and then guide them through the rest of the services.

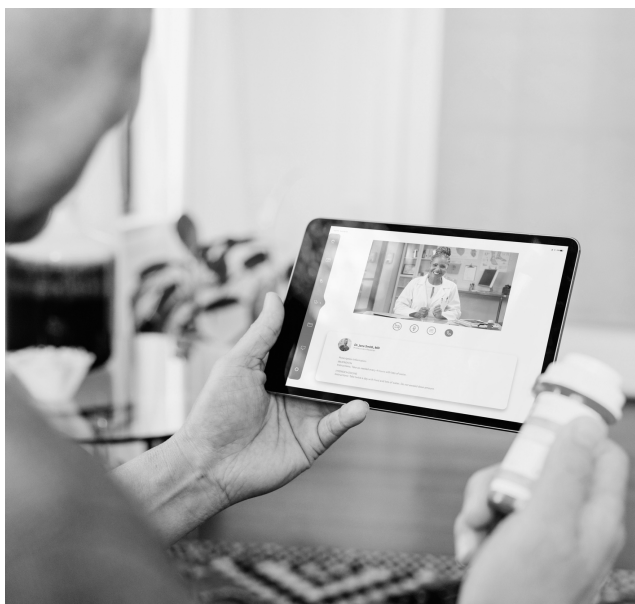
How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the course of healthcare in terms of virtual offerings?

This pandemic definitely accelerated the use of virtual health services. I believe that every healthcare provider who was working on a virtual offer had to launch it as it was, in order to adapt to the circumstances, and then start adjusting. At the moment, if you can’t offer a virtual consultation, you are at a disadvantage. What we expected to happen in the next five to 10 years happened in six months.

Do you think telehealth and accessing care virtually is here to stay?

In most countries, in-person consultations are back. Of course, seeing the patient, doing a physical examination, and other details you only get via personal interaction won’t be replaced by virtual consults, but these virtual services are complementing the in-person experience. Right now, a lot of patients are still choosing to have a teleconsultation rather than expose themselves by going to hospitals or medical centres. Virtual care is here to stay; we just have to learn how to develop it beyond the pandemic.

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What do you think the future of virtual care will bring?

I’m hoping to see the development of more apps to keep track of your health, your medication supplies or your next check-ups. When services are delivered in a more expedited way, they can improve the quality of life of our patients. Patients are able to share their clinical data in a more effective way.

One of the biggest opportunities in my mind right now is what we can do with all the data we collect from virtual services. This will allow us to create more effective healthcare programmes,

and a better driven steerage for our patient's treatments. Artificial Intelligence will allow us to incorporate machine and deep learning with clinical informatics and improve quality outcomes. We will be able to identify and manage patients, in chronic diseases for example, to prevent complications and readmissions and so on. It will also avoid unnecessary utilisation and lower associated costs. I'm really excited about the future of virtual care.

Written by: **Cigna Wellbeing**

With special thanks to:



Dr. Valeria Campozano, Medical Advisor at Cigna in North America.

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