



# How ThedaCare Powers Population Health with b.well's Digital Front End

## Introduction

The vision of ThedaCare is to reinvent the health care industry by becoming a proactive partner in health—enriching the lives of all and creating value in everything they do. To achieve that vision, the health system confronts the same challenges facing providers everywhere. Higher operational costs amid flat reimbursement. Disruption from the shift to value-based care and population health. Vast amounts of data newly available from apps, wearables and devices. Not to mention rising expectations as consumers demand digital experiences from their providers rivaling those of other industries like banking, travel and shopping.

With all of these challenges in mind, in early 2020, ThedaCare turned to digital health, rolling out to its team members, patients and the community at large the nation's first digital "front end" to health care, from b.well Connected Health. Dubbed "[Ripple by ThedaCare](#)" to illustrate the cumulative power of change on a community, the app and digital platform integrates and analyzes data from virtually any source and presents it in a way that encourages and incentivizes consumers to improve their health while lowering costs.

"To create a healthier community, we have to become an organization that proactively knows our patients, anticipates health wants and needs, and prevents issues from arising," said Imran A. Andrabi, MD, FAAP, President and CEO of ThedaCare. "Ripple by ThedaCare does that by engaging people on the front end, providing patients and our communities a simple, secure way to manage health, save time and, in the process, create greater peace of mind."

## ThedaCare

110 years in the community

Serving 600,000 community members

7,000 team members

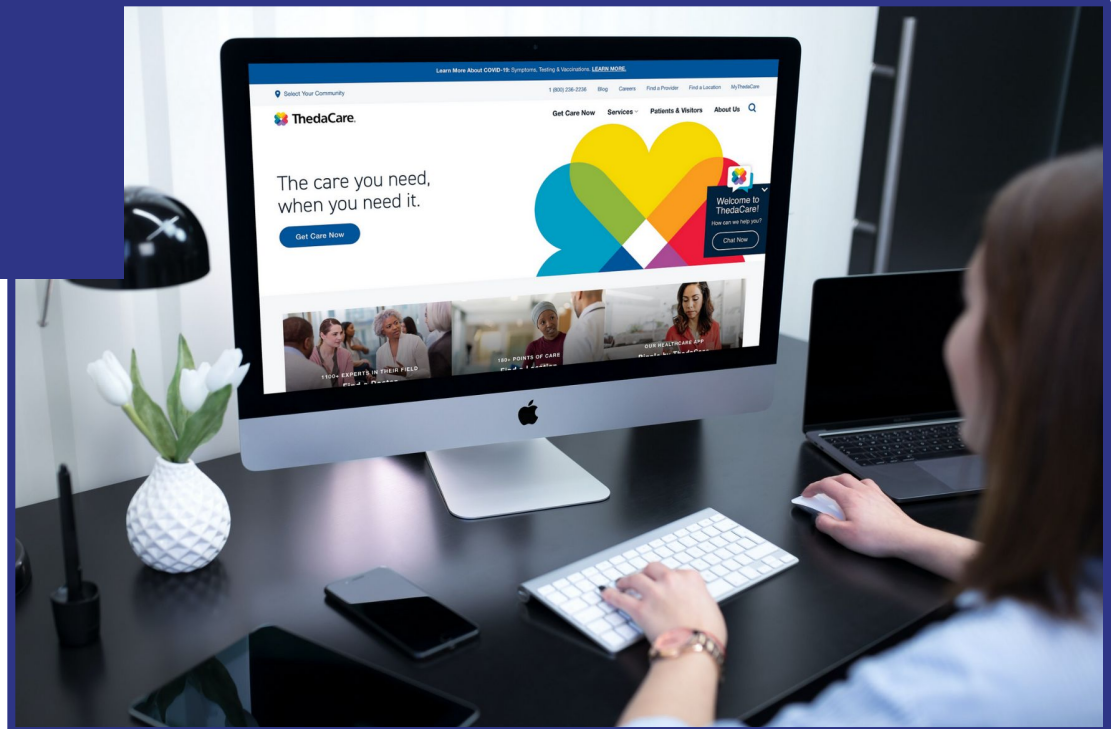
180 points of care

Largest employer in NE and Central Wisconsin

\$1 billion net revenue

## The Challenge

### Evolving Reimbursement Models and Data Fragmentation



Like most other American health systems, ThedaCare has been gradually minimizing its dependence on traditional fee-for-service reimbursement while taking on higher levels of risk-based payment. For instance, all ThedaCare employees, dependents and a growing number of community members are covered by ThedaCare’s full-risk accountable care organization (ACO). The health system expects that fully half of the care it provides will be reimbursed under some form of risk by 2022.

To succeed in this new value-based world, ThedaCare knew it needed to master the art of population health management. Dr. Andrabi described the goal as fourfold: providing high-quality care; access for everyone in the community; a great patient experience; and affordable care. “It’s a business model that supports the organization’s mission of improving the health and well-being of the communities we serve by empowering each person to live their unique best life.”

Successful population health management requires a complete view of each patient’s health. But getting that view requires making sense of a patchwork of fragmented information held by outside providers, payers, and the patients themselves. “To really get a handle on patient care being delivered to our communities, we have to transcend all the different organizations the patient touches,” explained Jim Albin, ThedaCare Chief Information Officer.

ThedaCare’s Information Services (IS) systems were able to integrate data from many traditional sources and present it via a web portal, enabling patients to view their health records and lab results, and refill medications online. The goal was to increase usability of digital front doors by its patients. Moreover, ThedaCare wanted to integrate the portal’s access to the avalanche of digital data streaming from wearables, remote monitors, and the more than 500,000 health-related apps available for patients to use on their phones. Access to all of that data was contributing to information overload and confusion among consumers and, all too often, driving fragmented and wasteful care.

ThedaCare’s leaders were convinced that harnessing that sea of data and figuring out how to make it actionable for patients was the key to solving the population health puzzle, as well as addressing the behavioral choices that studies show influence 80% of a person’s health.





## The Solution

### A New Digital Front End To Health

The b.well Connected Health platform is purpose-designed to turbocharge population health management. The platform delivers a long-overdue digital technology for health information interoperability and aggregation, empowering consumers to manage all of their health care in one location that is persistent, mobile, and personalized. For health systems, the b.well platform serves as a new “front end” to health – a leap beyond the digital front door that delivers new insights, unprecedented communication tools, easy navigation into services, and deep consumer engagement.

To accomplish this, b.well leverages FHIR-based application programming interfaces (APIs), the new standard in interoperability, to consolidate a 360-degree view of real-time health data from virtually any source. This includes labs, pharmacies, Medicare, the Veterans Administration, third-party apps and devices, and any FHIR-enabled health plan or provider—access that is now mandated by the Patient Right of Access law. b.well’s use of industry standards means the data can be easily integrated with a health system’s major applications, including the Epic electronic health record (EHR) used by ThedaCare’s providers. So patients can use b.well on their phone or a PC to do all of the things they could do through the web portal, plus view and share information from any outside source in a way that previously would have required them to maintain multiple logins and passwords.

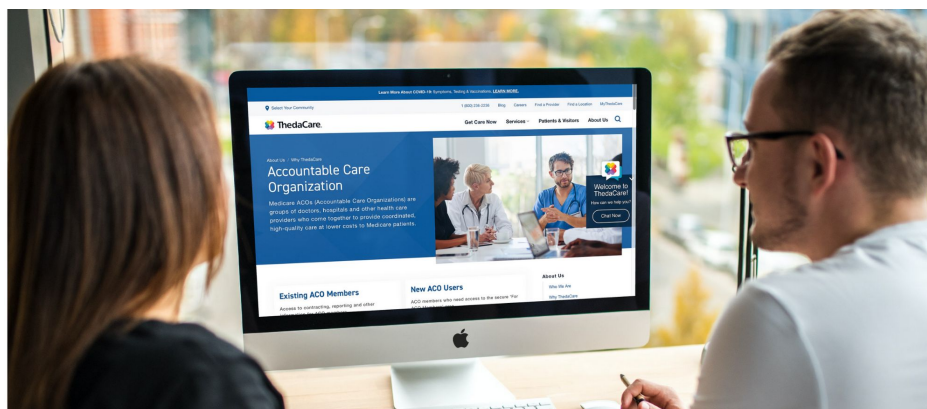
ThedaCare began to implement the b.well platform in 2019 with plans to roll it out to its team members and then the community at large in 2020. Then COVID-19 intervened. When the scale of the pandemic became clear in March and April 2020, the health system shelved most plans for IS enhancements. Rather than delay the roll-out of b.well, Dr. Andrabi decided to accelerate it.

“I knew that we would need a fast, dependable way to share real-time COVID-related information from a trusted source with our team and community members,” he said.

On June 1, 2020, ThedaCare announced the launch of its white labeled version of b.well, dubbed Ripple by ThedaCare. The Ripple experience gave people the ability to coordinate health information across providers, pharmacies and health care systems. Everyone who downloads Ripple by ThedaCare and registers has secure access to their provider and insurance information, can manage their medications, schedule and conduct in-person or virtual visits, and receive alerts and reminders on future care needs, such as immunizations and preventative care.

“Our goal with Ripple by ThedaCare is to make exceptional care effortless and easier for our patients,” explained Dr. Andrabi. “Convenience was an important part of the design, especially for those who manage the health of multiple family members. For the mother who needs to schedule her child’s wellness exam, refill a parent’s medication, or make an appointment for herself, Ripple by ThedaCare has the capability to do all of that through a secure platform.”

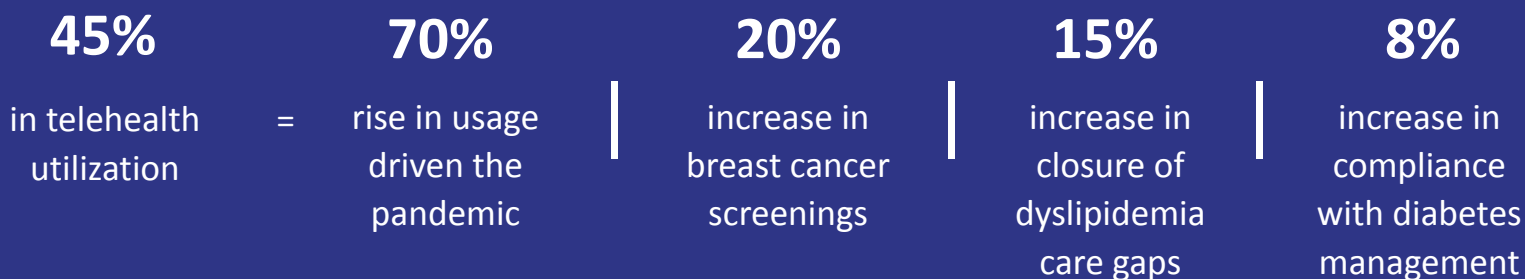
## The Results: Industry-Leading Adoption, Engagement and Outcome Improvement



A year after launch, the app has generated significant adoption and engagement. The number of people who have downloaded the app rose by 312% in the first 10 months after launch, a rate that continues to increase today. Moreover, 83% of Ripple users who are designated as “high risk” due to their condition are interacting with Ripple in a meaningful way, said Dr. Andrabi.

Overall, 70% of their very own ThedaCare ACO population is now using Ripple, with an impressive engagement rate ranging from 74% to 95%. Compared to the industry average of roughly 20% to 27%, Ripple’s high engagement rate is due to its ability to provide the convenient, personalized and digital experience consumers have come to demand – “tell me when I need to do something and be there when I need you.”

All of that engagement has driven significant improvements, contributing to ThedaCare’s population health goals despite barriers created by the worst pandemic in more than 100 years. Among Ripple by ThedaCare users, these include:



Less easy to quantify but equally impactful has been Ripple’s ability to help keep ThedaCare team members and the community at large safe during the pandemic. By the time Ripple was launched, it was clear that Wisconsin would be inundated with COVID-19 cases. Committed to keeping its staff safe, ThedaCare asked b.well to create a mobile triage solution that team members could use every day to verify their health before coming in to work.

Thanks to the agile, configurable nature of the b.well platform, the company was able to develop and launch its COVID-19 Return to Work Solution in less than three months. The solution helped to transition ThedaCare workers safely back to shared workspaces while reducing the burden on internal HR teams—all while addressing employees’ health needs and protecting their privacy.

*b.well is the only platform that I’ve seen from a comprehensive integration perspective that enables us to engage people on the front end rather than trying to figure out how to manage their health on the back end.*

*– Imran A. Andrabi, MD, FAAFP, President and CEO of ThedaCare*

## What's Next?

Going forward, ThedaCare is focused on continuing to use Ripple as the primary digital means of engaging patients in health improvement. New areas of focus will include using Ripple to help reduce the 44 percent of overall pharmacy costs attributed to people who use 10 or more medications. Heavy users may be influenced by timely, personalized communications routed through Ripple.

Another new focus for Ripple by ThedaCare is the use of digital navigation to address social determinants of health. These could include identifying people discharged from the hospital who need support with housing, food or transportation, and using Ripple to help navigate them to those services. Similarly, Ripple will be used to help ensure that ThedaCare has the appropriate navigation and care pathways available to provide behavioral health access to anyone who needs it.

"We'll continue to learn, adjust and ensure we're taking the right steps to improve health, and make it easy for people to navigate through the sometimes difficult maze of health care and empower them to live their best lives," said Dr. Andrabi.

"As a health system, we have an opportunity to engage consumers in the right behaviors on the 'front end' to help us, together, get to the right outcomes," he added. "b.well succeeds by integrating all the pieces and parts such as integrating bi-directionally with the electronic health record, and by using behavioral psychology, behavioral economics and game theory to engage the consumer in their own journey to health and well-being. That's the true change agent and the reason why the number of people that stay engaged with the Ripple by ThedaCare platform is extremely high."

## Fast User Authentication with Mastercard Verification



Consumers increasingly want to use their mobile phones to connect with their doctors, get information about their insurance, and share sensitive health information with trusted sources. But the process for authenticating themselves to access that information is complicated, difficult, and not always secure.

Recognizing that it's more important now than ever to protect patient privacy and secure their information, b.well has partnered with Mastercard, a global technology company in the payments industry, to provide consumers a simpler and more secure way to prove their identity online and in-person when accessing healthcare services.

Mastercard's ID Verification service, integrated within b.well, enables ThedaCare's Ripple users to securely verify their identity in real time using their mobile phones. That creates a fast, frictionless process for healthcare organizations like ThedaCare to quickly verify a consumer's identity before providing access to their health information.

In fact, Ripple users who opt into ID Verification complete the registration process 22% faster than those who opt out. That time savings of 47 seconds has led to a 35% reduction in customer drop-off during registration.

Mastercard ID Verification is designed to employ a combination of government ID document scanning, facial biometrics with liveness detection, and mobile phone intelligence to deliver high success rates for automated user verification. It is designed to comply with the federal government's highest level of assurance for remote consumer-facing identity proofing. That accuracy is reflected in ID Verification's 87% success rate in verifying a Ripple user's identity and pre-filling their personal information, delivering more accurate user data.

"Signing up for Ripple was super easy, and I love the simple identity verification process," said Jess Lisbeth, a Ripple user and ThedaCare patient. "Knowing ThedaCare ensures the highest security levels gives me the confidence to connect all of my health information to the app and know it's safe."