Amazon Makes its Move: DTC Telehealth Service Opens for Employees

The online giant has launched Amazon Care, a direct-to-consumer telehealth platform initially targeted at its employees in the Seattle area.
By Eric Wicklund (mailto:ewicklund@xtelligentmedia.com)

September 25, 2019 - Amazon is getting ready to take on the direct-to-consumer telehealth industry.

The online giant has rolled out Amazon Care (https://amazon.care/), a virtual care clinic offering telehealth and mHealth services for its employees in the Seattle area. After a trial period, it’s expected the service will open to consumers.

The long-awaited move puts Amazon in a crowded field populated by connected health vendors like American Well, Teladoc, InTouch Health, Doctor On Demand and MDLive, pharmacy and retail companies like Walgreens, Rite Aid, CVS, Target, Publix and Walmart, and hospitals and health systems with their own DTC platforms.

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According to the Amazon Care website, the platform will include an mHealth app offering Amazon employees on-demand access with a clinician “for advice, answers, diagnosis, treatment or referrals,” an online messaging platform for healthcare questions, a prescription service and the option of scheduling in-person care through Seattle-based Oasis Medical.

“We’re currently piloting a healthcare benefit designed to help Amazon employees get fast access to healthcare without an appointment, at the convenience of their schedules, at their preferred location (home, office, or virtual),” a company spokesperson told CNBC (https://www.cnbc.com/2019/09/24/amazon-launches-employee-health-clinic-amazon-care.html). “Amazon Care eliminates travel and wait time, connecting employees and their family members to a physician or nurse practitioner through live chat or video, with the option for in-person follow up services from a registered nurse ranging from immunizations to instant strep throat detection.”

If and when Amazon expands its telehealth platform outside the company, its size and resources would dwarf most other DTC services, giving consumers a new option and challenging healthcare providers in areas like cost and convenience. The challenge to Amazon, meanwhile, would be to create a service that maintains clinical value and reliability, a far different prospect than creating an online marketplace for consumer merchandise.
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