Philanthropy4Technology Summer Newsletter

New Project

Afya Foundation | Global

We are excited to announce our newest project, partnering with the Afya Foundation to support their switch to a digital inventory management system! The organization, at its core, ships excess medical supplies from the United States healthcare system to underserved communities and areas of crisis across the globe. Most recently, they have devoted their efforts to responding to the conflict in Ukraine, but these efforts have highlighted the ineficiencis of their current warehouse. Digital infrastucture will both allow them to operate at scale and serve as a wharehouse job training site for rehabilitated convicts and those with Intelectual/Developmental disorders.

A Look at the Future

Kingbridge Heights Community Center | Bronx

We have two projects we are working towards announcing in the near future, the first being with the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center. Working with Horace Mann School's Center for Community Values and Action, we hope to provide a full set of chromebooks and the acompanying charging cart to replace their decades old room of desktops. These devices will be both more funtional and flexible.

Hays Education Foundation | Austin

For the second project, we are parnering with the Hays Education Foundation to provide mobile Wi-Fi units for their buses. Many of the rides are over an hour each way and this will give them the internet needed to study and do homework.

Newsletters

At the footer of our website, included in this email, is a new option to sign up for monthly newsletters like this one. It is the best way to quickly learn about new developments at P4T. You can also respond to this email to let us know if you're interested. Finally, there is an archive of past newsletters on the "Completed Projects" page.

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Support: https://www.gofundme.com/f/philanthropy-4-technology-bridge-the-divide

Website Refresh

We want to take this space to share a few updates to the Philanthropy4Technology website. Our homepage now displays some statistics on the work we have done, as well as highlights of the site as a whole for those who may be navigating it for the first time. Our "Projects" page should be easier to explore now that our current and previous projects are found in the same place, and we have a new page devoted to our seasonal newsletters.

Blog Updates
A New Post!

Go check out our new blog titled "More Accessible Medicine? Telehealth's Future Relies on Bridging the Digital Divide." You can find it on the "Blog" page of our website or on the next two pages of this newsletter, and we discuss how telehealth's immense potential to increase the acessibility of healthcare in America is contingent on our bridging of the digital divide beforehand.

Become an Ambassador

Philanthropy4Technology is always looking for more like-minded students keen on bridging the digital divide and sharing our message in their own community. Look for the application form at the footer of our website!

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While it was formed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth is looking more and more likely to stick around. It provides a great opportunity to extend healthcare access to those who have never had it, but its potential cannot be realized until the right digital infrastructure is in place.
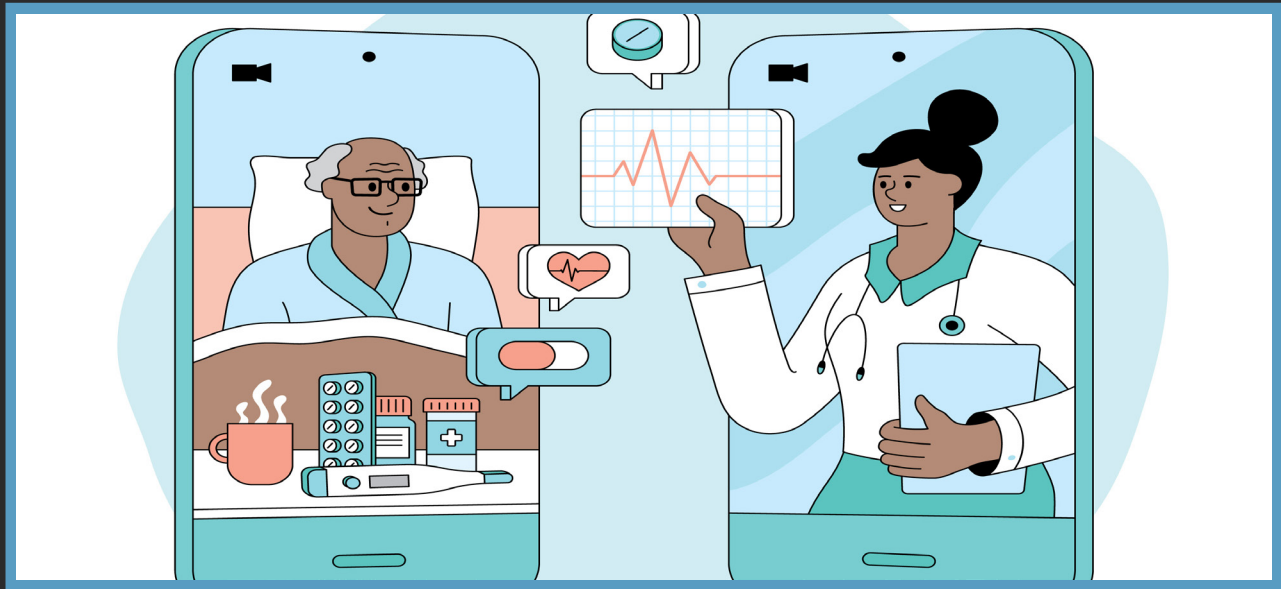
As we all know, a lot had to change after the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the name of safety. Eating at restaurants was out of the question, schools moved to a virtual format, and when one (albeit rarely!) left the house, a mask was a must. And while these consequences of the pandemic have fortunately all but subsided, one change that will happily be sticking around is the emergence of telehealth. As one would expect, not being able to visit the doctor or access health services was a rather large issue. Society had to innovate, using communications technology, be it phone calls, video calls, or even text messages, to access health care services. These practices, often labeled by the aforementioned term "telehealth" or similar terms like "telemedicine" or "e-medicine", might not have perfectly replaced visiting one's doctor in person, but they are a perfect option in addition to physical visits for a post-pandemic world due to one factor: accessibility.

Telehealth services are perfect for members of underserved communities who might not be able to access very necessary medical services. For patients who are elderly, are on the lower income spectrum, live in remote areas, or are in the midst of addiction recovery, physically getting to the doctor's office was and continues to be a challenge, but telehealth is a solution. Expanded online services, during the pandemic and now, have led to care so affordable that many people in low-income communities have been able to access medical care for the first time. For patients with more specific needs, video visits are again a solution. Those who have never sought therapy in the past due to the stigma surrounding mental health treatments finally have an option that does not involve them driving and then sitting in a therapist's office, and medical specialists are now accessible to patients outside of select major cities.

One great initiative that exemplifies the unique benefits of telehealth, for all communities, was launched by the state of Massachusetts this May in partnership with population health tech startup Color Health. Those who test positive for COVID-19 in the state can get free virtual consultations to determine whether they're candidates for Paxlovid, the drug that's been found to reduce severe infections and hospitalizations from the coronavirus by nearly 90 percent. The program will then send a prescription of the drug, free of charge, to a pharmacy near the patient or, if necessary, to the person's home overnight. Since the treatment needs to be started within five days of symptoms, only telehealth makes it possible to receive the correct prescription for the drug while patients are still in quarantine.

There is, however, a catch to the benefits of telehealth: those who are most in need of this increased access to medical services are barred from it due to the digital divide. Many patients lack the physical devices needed to engage in a video visit, and even patients with capable devices often lack access to broadband internet or the digital literacy to use those devices. The New England Journal of Medicine quantifies this unfortunate reality, describing how one in four Americans would not be able to attend an online appointment if offered to them, and the current lack of infrastructure and digital literacy is thus preventing the long-term implementation of telehealth. Consequently, until we bridge the digital divide, we will not be able to realize the potential for these services to increase access to medical care for underserved communities.

In order to promote telehealth and accessible healthcare more broadly, initiatives targeting the digital divide are needed from all angles. I've already written about the work being done by the federal government, state governments, corporations, and organizations including but not limited to Philanthropy4Technology, but there is evidently a long road ahead. As part of a larger community dedicated to making the world a better place, we can take a few steps on the road to bridging the digital divide, and with the emergence of telehealth, equity in healthcare will naturally follow.