



# WEBINAR TOP TAKEAWAYS

## Hospital and Health System Innovation Summit: PANDEMIC TO PARTNERSHIP: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INNOVATION

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In this interactive discussion, health system innovation leaders addressed the impact of COVID-19 on health systems' plans to pursue innovation efforts; the lasting implications of the pandemic; and the prioritization of innovation efforts and investments post-COVID-19. McDermott Will and Emery's Partner **Kerrin B. Slattery** moderated this discussion featuring insights from **Lisa Prasad**, Vice President and Chief Innovation Officer at Henry Ford Health System; **Damon Broyles**, Vice President of Clinical Innovation at Mercy Technology Services; **Anders Brown**, Sr. Vice President and Managing Director at Tegria (founded by Providence); and **Chris Coburn**, Chief Innovation Officer at Mass General Brigham and President of Partners HealthCare International.

### Innovation Efforts have Accelerated

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In the face of the pandemic's vast and varied challenges, health systems have prioritized their efforts to adapt and innovate strategically. COVID-19 has accelerated innovation efforts and should be extracted to other areas moving forward. "An enormous part of innovation is recognizing the unmet need," Mr. Coburn said. "In a sense, seven billion people now recognize at least one unmet need. For our providers and the folks supporting them, the issue became organizing ourselves and setting priorities. We created 19 groups against all the principal areas of need. Those drove innovation and allowed us to set overall priorities."

### Renewed Focus on Population Health

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The intense demands of combatting the pandemic fueled creative thinking and innovative solutions. For example, Henry Ford Health System' used virtual reality technology to train healthcare workers on the many different types of ventilators put into place. "COVID-19 really gave unprecedented meaning to population health," Ms. Prasad said. "The ramifications will be felt for years and maybe decades to come."

### Importance and Maturation of Virtual Care

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COVID-19 has permanently changed healthcare culture, and the focus on virtual care will be maintained in the coming years. One significant area is patient triage, Mr. Brown said. Early in the pandemic, the influx of COVID-19 patients placed tremendous pressure on health systems' phone bank and in-person triage capacities. As a result, many health systems turned to chatbot frameworks and other innovative virtual solutions to triage patients safely and efficiently.

### Communication is Key

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COVID-19 has emphasized the importance of standardization and communication within health systems to allow for more rapid change and business agility. It has been a crash course in quick decision-making for many health systems and rolling out rapid system-wide change efforts. "That reduction in intransigence in the organization is something that, because of the increased need for consolidation and reinforcement of communication at our health system, we can hopefully sustain a little bit better going forward," Dr. Broyles said. Increased system agility will make future innovation efforts easier.

### Recognizing the Importance of Data

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COVID-19 has heavily underscored the value of data in healthcare—and the challenges that must be overcome in order for it to be aggregated and used effectively. Innovations have proven and will continue to prove useful in collecting data. "Making sense of the data that this industry has—not just as a way to solve the boutique or localized problems that we have in a physical space or with a patient, but really making changes in the system holistically—is really going to be a frontier of work that everyone has to lock arms on and try to advance," Mr. Brown said.

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