

PRINT-24/7 digital connections through OSF OnCall empowers patients and improves outcomes

Elexys Rosales, a 25-year-old petite pregnant woman from Bloomington, Illinois, was plagued by anxiety that seemed to get worse at night during her third trimester. Her concern was not only limited to her anxiety affecting the baby girl she's carrying, but also having a low-weight baby due to her own below-average weight. Fortunately, her doctor suggested a mobile app and online platform providing her 24/7 contact with a care team made up of a nurse, pharmacist, social worker and licensed therapist.

The tool was developed by [Get Well](#), a digital health company founded by cancer survivor Michael O'Neil, who wanted to be more involved in his own care. Together with Peoria, Illinois-based OSF HealthCare and its [OSF OnCall](#) digital health arm, they deliver the kind of experience that provides the necessary support for patients such as Rosales where, when and how they want it.

For Rosales, it means being able to reach out at 3 a.m. when her anxiety is keeping her awake.

"Being pregnant and having anxiety, you get so emotional and I would be crying to myself at night. I would call the nurses and they would be on the phone with me for hours sometimes, or just 30 minutes to help me calm myself down. They would talk about different things, including my future with the baby."

Women enrolled in the [OSF OnCall pregnancy and postpartum program](#) receive a blood pressure cuff and regularly report their readings through routine check-ins to avoid having high blood pressure that can lead to pre-eclampsia – a potentially, life-threatening condition. High readings or certain patient messages send alerts through the GetWell Loop platform and prompt an OSF OnCall nurse to reach out. In some cases, the call is escalated to a video visit or an ambulance run to the hospital emergency department.

OSF HealthCare serves 1 million patients a year. Brandi Clark, vice president of Digital Care, OSF OnCall, says digital tools and platforms such as Get Well can expand access to care and provide wrap-around services to improve a patient's experience, no matter where they are physically and in their health care journey.

By leveraging remote patient monitoring, education, coaching, navigation and virtual care, OSF OnCall optimizes the expertise of highly-engaged nurses, many of whom work remotely, ensuring personalized care for patients through many encounters. It also helps retain experienced nurses who embrace the new opportunity to care for patients in a different way, without some of the physical stressors of in-person care.

The ultimate goal is to improve patient outcomes and experiences while reducing costs. Clark says early metrics reveal supplementing in-person care with additional support is paying off.

"We've enrolled thousands of patients who have been discharged from our hospitals and have demonstrated a 10% or greater reduction in hospital readmissions for those patients who are enrolled in that hospital discharge program. Additionally, we're really beginning to learn about the outcomes that we're achieving with our pregnancy program and beginning to actually see some of those patients that we're taking care of delivering healthy babies."

OSF OnCall Digital Care Manager Kara Roat says Get Well has a [nationally-recognized library of medical education](#) that includes videos and tutorials that can be customized for specific OSF patient populations. The company's digital platform was also used to quickly respond to patient needs, such as remote patient monitoring for babies and young children when [RSV hit earlier and harder](#) last year. The GetWell loop can offer education to individuals with a new diagnosis, in addition to training for a patient and their family when preparing to leave the hospital. Roat says communications can include reminders and questions.

"We ask questions like did you pick up your medications from the pharmacy after you left? Do you have a follow-up visit with your provider? Do you have transportation to that visit with your provider to ensure that they're successful as they leave our hospitals, so they don't get readmitted to our hospital if we can prevent it?"

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement via digital technology has rapidly become the preferred form of communication for many, but not all. For patients who need help getting enrolled and learning the basics, OSF OnCall digitally-enabled community health workers help patients get connected. Clark explains tools are easy to use and the Get Well platform makes it simple to assess if patients need other support such as food, transportation, rental assistance or other drivers of health.

"If needs are identified, we're able to connect them through our digitally-upskilled community health workers who are able to help ensure those members of our community and our patients are getting all the services that they need."

Those community health workers are often deeply engaged in neighborhood activities and can be embedded within organizations such as the Salvation Army or the YM or YWCA. They can also be stationed at OSF OnCall Connect Bars that are in select, easy-access medical offices.

Roat emphasizes the various programs available through GetWell Loop offer a digital safety net that builds trust through a growing relationship with patients.

"All of our services are in addition to the in-person care that patients should be receiving each and every day. We really strive to fill in the gaps for these patients. It allows them to receive care at any time of day or night and have the opportunity to meet with the provider (virtually) or chat with a nurse whenever is needed."

Part of the education through GetWell Loop includes live, online pregnancy classes. Rosales likes that she can keep her camera off if she doesn't feel like engaging. She says sessions dealing with anxiety have been helpful, particularly when she hears other would-be moms talk about how they cope with their struggles. With her own family in Colorado, Rosales says she's comforted by having round-the-clock support.

"The nurses are like my family of course. So I know they will always be there for me and support me so I would definitely ask many questions about this pregnancy of mine, especially my first time. I just don't want anything to happen to me or the baby so I think it's best to ask as many questions as you can."

Rosales also plans to enroll in the postpartum support option available through OSF OnCall, which offers depression screening, education and 24/7 support after delivery. The pregnancy and postpartum program has been able to provide five times the amount of depression screening than is traditionally provided.

Mental health is a growing concern for all ages across health care. Clark says her team is developing more mental health digital support options in the coming months. OSF already offers [SilverCloud](#) – a free, secure, anonymous and interactive platform to manage the feelings and causes of mild to moderate stress, anxiety or depression.