

## CASE STUDY

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# A glimpse into the future: The 100% virtual care doctor



Thomas Kim, MD, chief medical officer of Med2You, is an internist and psychiatrist in Austin, Texas, who has leveraged virtual care to prevent burnout. He has embraced telehealth to such an extent that he no longer conducts in-person patient visits.



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### The Importance of Access

Dr. Kim uses a smartphone telehealth app to conduct video visits with an at-risk population that has historically had difficulty accessing healthcare, and in particular, behavioral healthcare — incarcerated juveniles, often in rural facilities.

For Dr. Kim, the greatest benefits of practicing as a 100% virtual care doctor are increased provider and patient satisfaction. Dr. Kim believes telehealth enables him to forge stronger bonds with his patients.

Because providers like him are such scarce resources devoting themselves to underserved populations, demand for their time is high. As a result, telehealth plays an essential role for Dr. Kim, helping him see far more patients — and see those patients with regular frequency — than if he had to travel across the state of Texas to conduct in-person visits.



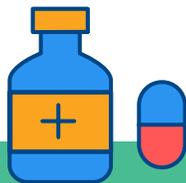
## Better Relationships, Less Burnout

By enabling him to visit with patients more often than every few months and act as the right doctor at the right time with the right information, telehealth helps Dr. Kim develop patient relationships that deliver care more on the patient's terms, a key component in boosting patient satisfaction.

For example, for several years Dr. Kim had provided care to patients at a small community health center in a rural area of the state. Due to funding and staffing shortages, the center's leadership had to make the difficult decision to close the facility. However, even after the facility closed, Dr. Kim was able to maintain relationships and continue consultations with

many of the patients he had previously treated there – something that would have been far more difficult, if not impossible, without telehealth.

Additionally, practicing virtual care has freed Dr. Kim to explore other professional avenues, something that he believes has gone a long way in reducing the chances of him suffering from burnout. As a result of the enhanced efficiency of visiting with patients via telehealth from his home, Dr. Kim now is able to divide his time between consulting work (he is principal of a broad clinical and consulting company called AGMP Telehealth) and his medical practice. By enabling him to explore an outside interest and reducing the monotony of office visit after office visit, telehealth has given Dr. Kim a healthier work-life balance and made him a more satisfied clinician.



### A prescription for change

Dr. Kim is far from alone in seeking a kinder, gentler alternative to the reality of what practicing medicine has become. The National Academy's burnout report should erase any doubts about the need to improve physicians' working environments. Confronting and defeating the epidemic of clinician burnout is likely to be one of the healthcare system's great challenges over the coming decades.