

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Virtual care built by and for Alberta docs

The [Patient Medical Home](#) remains a cornerstone of primary care, and Alberta physicians have been [leading the way](#). According to [The College of Family Physicians of Canada](#), Alberta has 42 primary care networks that serve 3.2 million patients across the province while working in collaboration with hundreds of allied health partners. Instead of a one-size-fits-all model, the strength of the PMH is the ability for local physicians to understand and contextualize their patients to better deliver comprehensive care.

It is no surprise then, that even back in the pre-pandemic era of 2019, the CFPC in their [vision paper](#) recommended that the ideal PMH would also have the capability to employ technology to enable virtual care and telemedicine. After decades of relentless globalization and technological disparity, COVID-19 has forced Alberta physicians to reflect within our own communities and to harness our collective creativity to define what virtual care looks like. The resourcefulness of our fellow Albertans has been highlighted in locally developed [hand sanitizers](#), [PPE](#) and [community advocacy](#), reinforcing what it means to be Alberta Strong.

Physician-led and locally developed, Alberta-based virtual care solutions tailor to the unique needs of our patients and providers. It allows us to vocalize how we care for our patients and to express what works and what doesn't. It is from this same collective voice and experience that over the last few months we've realized that virtual care hasn't been as simple as pushing the on button. Implementing virtual care appropriately requires training, patient buy-in and a reliable broadband infrastructure. Software built for virtual care requires the understanding of physician and clinic workflow. Ultimately, user-friendliness cannot be fostered without physician input.



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Dr. Husein Moloo is a Calgary-based hospitalist physician and a former medical school graduate at the University of Calgary. During his work and medical training, he experienced inequities in health care access and felt that technological innovation would be a good building block to bridge the disparity. In November 2019, this stirred Dr. Moloo and his team to lay the groundwork for [PurposeMed](#), an online virtual care platform with the goal of creating an Alberta-based, physician-led solution that would allow greater access to care for disenfranchised populations, particularly those in rural and remote settings. While the original plan was to have an official launch in the summer of 2020, the launch didn't necessarily go according to plan.

"With the strain on 811 from COVID-19, we recognized the need to support physicians and patients immediately with our product. After making the go decision on Friday, a weekend of hard work and little sleep allowed us to launch on Monday, March 16," says Dr. Moloo. Surprisingly, in developing PurposeMed, Dr. Moloo did not have a background in software design. However, he found transferable skills in entrepreneurship from his previous experience in real estate management.

The launch of PurposeMed has not been without challenges. Nevertheless, a soft, early and unexpected launch allowed Dr. Moloo and his team to continuously improve and reiterate their platform. One thing that remains consistent, however, is Dr. Moloo's promise that the base platform will remain free to use for physicians.

"Physicians and patients can be confident that even as a free service, we are not selling confidential data. Our solution works alongside a physician's current workflow and EMR, meaning we don't store or collect medical data," says Dr. Moloo.

Naturally, physicians are curious about how PurposeMed remains a viable business model. Like many tech start-ups, they plan to operate on a "freemium" model with plans to introduce premium add-on features later to keep the platform financially viable.

"Despite the craziness associated with an early launch, we continued to work hard in the background. Our team has invested lots of energy in further developing the product." He continues, "On June 1, we were able to release our new website, updated branding and improved virtual care solutions."

There are many viable virtual care solutions in Alberta, with various features and price points. Some of these have been developed by physicians and some are integrated with traditional EMRs. Physicians must do their due diligence to find a solution that is cost effective, reliable and scalable, and facilitates the essence of the physician-patient relationship. There are pros and cons to all solutions. The value in developing home-grown solutions is the ability to contextualize patient care and accessibility at a local level PurposeMed is only one such Alberta physician-led solution that punctuates the resiliency, adaptability and untapped passion that physicians have for technological innovation.

Author's disclaimer: I have no personal or professional financial involvement nor do I receive any financial benefit from the organizations mentioned in this article.

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