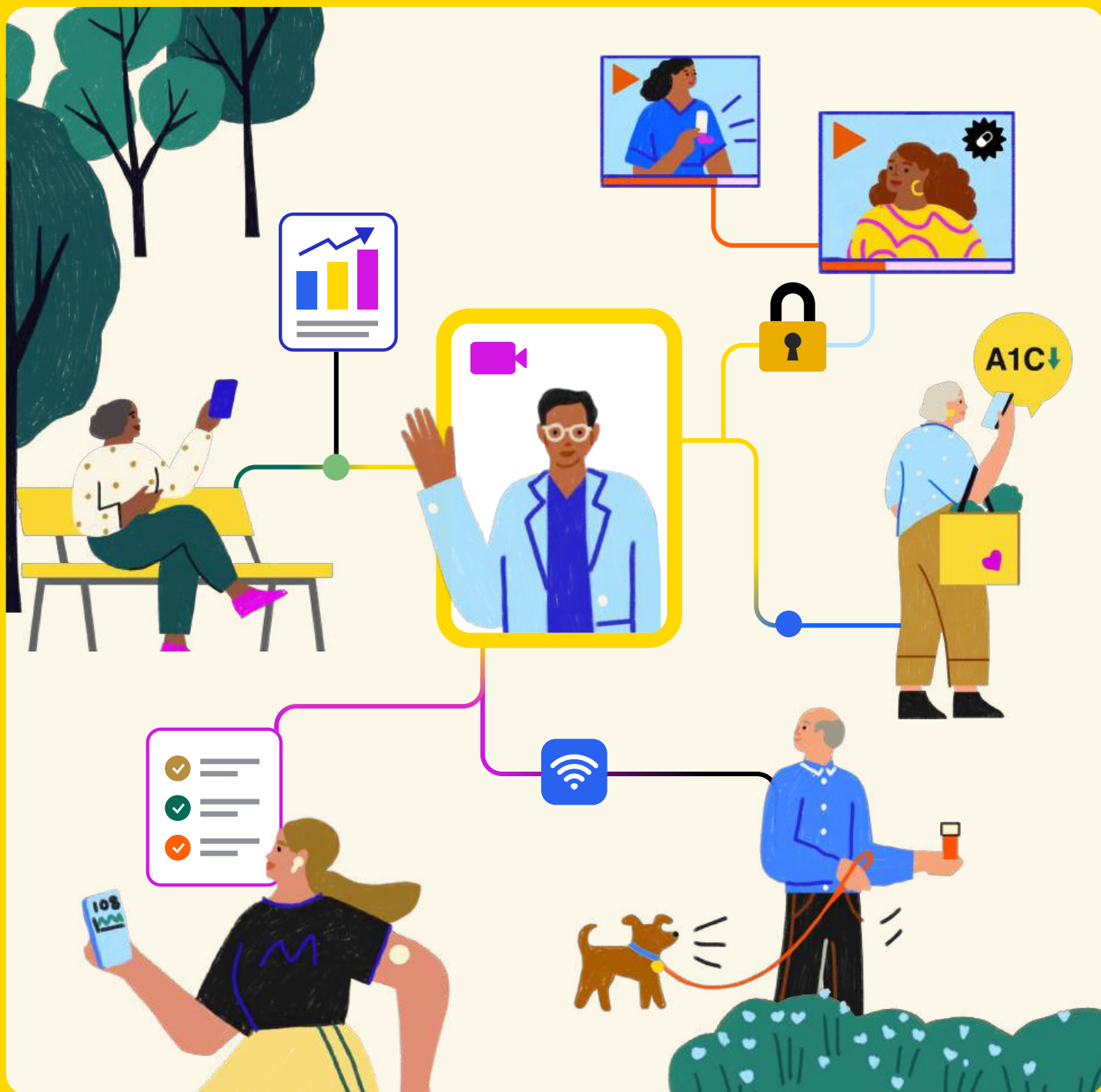


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Transforming Rural Healthcare through Medication Adherence Support

A Guide to Making the Case for Breakthrough Outcomes

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The Opportunity: Healthier Rural Communities

At least 46 million people live in rural areas of the United States—equivalent to the population of our 20 largest cities, or 15% of our overall population.¹ Yet, rural communities experience

- Higher rates of hypertension and obesity.
- Higher rates of cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.
- Higher rates of suicide and drug overdose deaths.
- Higher rates of asthma, especially among youth.
- Higher rates of HIV/HCV among tribal communities.
- A 20% higher age-adjusted death rate.²

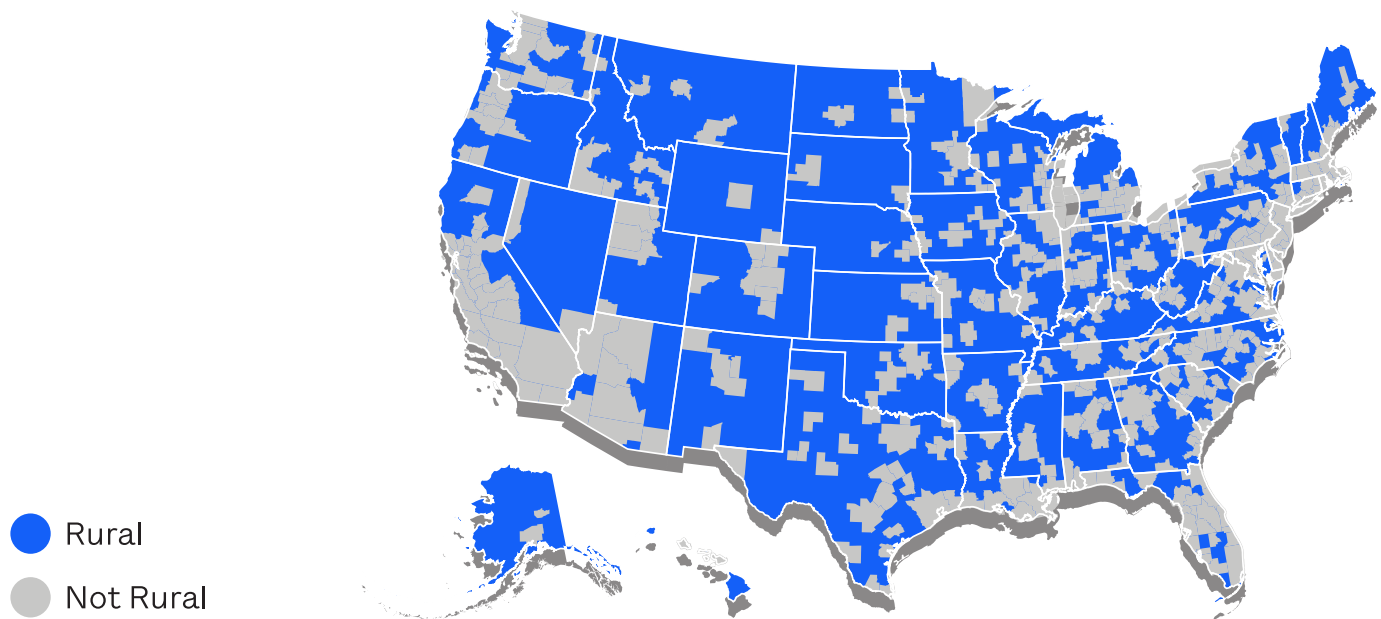
The disparity in health between rural and urban communities is clear. Less clear is how to resolve it due to rural healthcare's complexity.

The good news is advances in telehealth such as asynchronous video and in medication adherence are converging to make a measurable impact.

This guide explains how medication adherence support addresses top health challenges that rural communities face and how you can make the case to start or expand that support.

Areas Classified As Rural

Center for Rural America



[Scene]

¹American Medical Association
²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Who This Guide Is For

This guide is for leaders with responsibilities across the rural healthcare ecosystem, including state associations, government agencies, and healthcare providers.

State Associations	Government Agencies	Healthcare Providers
Empower members with medication adherence insight.	Reduce public health burdens in rural communities.	Address pressing rural health issues in a sustainable way.

Value of This Guide

We assembled this guide to complement the expertise you already have. This guide doesn't explain what rural healthcare is or what the general principles of telehealth are. This guide focuses on using medication adherence support to transform health in rural communities.



Save Research Time

We gathered the most current facts, statistics, and definitions. Focus less on basic research and more on what medication adherence support can do for your rural communities.



Accelerate Planning

Gain practical insights and tips to start making the case for medication adherence support. Tools such as the opportunity assessment worksheet and executive tear sheet can further aid your plans.



Set Up for Success

Get a head start with lessons learned from the most remote regions across the globe and perspective from industry leaders.

Let's start with an overview of common challenges in rural healthcare.

[Scene]

8 Challenges in Rural Healthcare Today

While rural communities in the United States deal with many challenges that affect healthcare, these are among the most significant now.

<p>Care Deserts</p> <p>80% of Counties Have a Care Desert³ These deserts lack adequate access to and infrastructure for healthcare services. Types of deserts include pharmacy, hospital and trauma, and primary care / community health.</p>	<p>Senior Health</p> <p>24% of Seniors Live in Rural Areas⁴ Rural residents age 65 and over are less likely to engage in healthy behaviors and to face challenges accessing specialized care as their health needs increase.</p>
<p>Staff Shortages</p> <p>30 Physicians: 100,000 People⁵ In rural areas, the ratio of primary physicians to people is 30:100,000. In urban areas, it's 30: 263. Lack of resources and burnout hinder attracting and retaining clinicians.</p>	<p>Tribal Health</p> <p>19% of AI / AN Adults in Rural Areas Have Diabetes⁶ American Indian and Alaskan Native adults in rural communities experience worse health outcomes than those in urban areas.</p>
<p>Transportation Burdens</p> <p>1:5 Adults with Limited Transit Access Forego Healthcare⁷ Public transportation is often lacking in rural areas. And even when residents have access to vehicles, they cite burdens such as extended drive times and high fuel costs.</p>	<p>Obesity + Chronic Diseases</p> <p>Nearly Half of Rural Residents Are Obese⁸ Adults with obesity are more likely to develop hypertension, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and other long-term health conditions.</p>
<p>Mental Health</p> <p>65% of Rural Counties Lack a Psychiatrist⁹ Rural residents can face unique stressors that affect their mental health but lack community options or support for seeking help.</p>	<p>Opioid Abuse</p> <p>1.2 Million Rural Residents Misused Opioid Prescriptions in 2024 Many rural areas are also dealing with illicit and synthetic opioid abuse. Besides overdose, risks include the spread of hepatitis C and HIV.</p>

If your organization faces any or all of these challenges as you support in rural communities, then medication adherence support has potential to make a meaningful difference.

³ Mapping Healthcare Deserts, GoodRX

⁴ Older Adults in Rural Areas Lag Behind on Key Health Outcomes and Behaviors, America's Health Rankings

⁵ Rural Physician Burnout and Staffing Shortage Impact, NRHA

⁶ National Rural Health Association

⁷ Urban Institute + Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

⁸ U.S. Obesity Rate Changes Differ for Rural and Urban Areas, USDA

⁹ Rural Mental Health Crisis, Mental Health America

What Is Medication Adherence Support?

Let's start with our brief definition, then break it down.

Medication adherence support is enabling individuals to take their medication as prescribed through proven interventions.

The Importance of Medication Adherence

We view medication adherence as the degree to which an individual takes the correct medication at the frequency, dosage, and timing prescribed. If an individual doesn't adhere, they risk suffering unwanted health outcomes ranging from disease progression to death. Consider these examples where medication adherence is crucial

- **GLP1s** to treat obesity and, to some extent, type 2 diabetes.
- **ACE inhibitors, beta blockers,** and other medications to treat high blood pressure.
- **Statins, inhibitors,** and other medications to treat high cholesterol.
- **Metformin** and other medications to treat type 2 diabetes.
- **Methadone** and other medications to treat opioid abuse.
- **Combination inhalers, inhaled corticosteroids,** and other medications to treat asthma.
- **Antiretrovirals** such as NRTIs and INSTIs to manage HIV.
- **Direct-acting antivirals** such as NS5A inhibitors to address HCV.

If many individuals in a rural community do not adhere to medications like these, it's not hard to imagine the cumulative financial toll and the strain on already limited resources. **In the U.S. overall, studies have found problems with medication adherence and optimization cause a \$528.4 billion burden annually.**¹⁰



Reasons Patients Do Not Adhere

Problems with medication adherence happen for a wide range of reasons, such as

- **Side Effects:** Individuals experience side effects or have concerns about them.
- **Misunderstanding:** Patients don't fully grasp how taking the medication will make a difference to their health now and in the future.
- **Complexity:** Patients deal with multiple medications and providers.
- **Lack of Symptoms:** When individuals aren't experiencing symptoms or the symptoms subside, they struggle to see the need for the medication.
- **Dosage:** Individuals are prescribed the wrong dosage, causing side effects or ineffective treatment.



Medication adherence support can address these reasons and more with techniques such as individual education, medication organizers and reminders, medication synchronization (e.g. refilling all prescriptions at the same time), comprehensive medication reviews, and directly observed therapy. When these techniques combine with telehealth or remote care, they can make a powerful impact on health outcomes for rural communities.

[Scene]

¹⁰ Cost of Prescription Drug-Related Morbidity and Mortality, Annals of Pharmacotherapy

Benefits of Medication Adherence Support to Rural Communities

Let's start with a few stories about the difference this support can make to individuals.

Success Stories in Rural Areas

After the Stroke:

Amber Learns to Control Blood Pressure and More

Amber was struggling to manage hypertension, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol when she suffered a stroke. As she recovered, her care plan became critical. Daily medication, including cholesterol treatment and a low-dose aspirin, was essential to preventing further complications.

But like many patients, Amber faced a challenge that isn't often discussed enough—consistency.

“I couldn't maintain a healthy blood pressure,” she explains. “My mood was fluctuating... and it all came down to one thing: I wasn't taking my medication regularly.”

Remembering to take her medication wasn't just a small inconvenience; it directly impacted how she felt day to day. Without consistency, her blood pressure remained unstable, and her overall well-being suffered.

That began to change when she received a letter introducing her to a medication adherence program, Scene Health.

After downloading the app, Amber initially saw it as just another tool. But one feature in particular created an unexpected shift in her behavior.



“The app made me feel accountable. I'd think 'Oh yeah, I need to do a video—which means I need to take my meds.’”

This simple moment of accountability helped her build a routine. But the program's greatest benefit was access. Amber found she could connect directly with nurses and a pharmacist whenever questions arose.

“It felt like having on-call doctors,” she says.

Through one of these conversations, Amber uncovered an issue she hadn't fully understood before. She had been experiencing swelling in her feet and ankles. Speaking with the pharmacist helped her recognize that this symptom required attention and was likely related to her overall treatment plan.

This kind of timely insight gave her a deeper understanding of her health and reinforced the importance of staying consistent with her care.



[Scene]

Managing Type 2 Diabetes: Support Motivates Jim through Complications

Jim has spent much of his life helping others navigate difficult situations. As a former drug counselor and program director, he was the one asking the questions—guiding people through intake, understanding their history, and helping them take the next step forward.

Now, Jim is the one managing a complex and evolving health condition of his own, diabetes. After speaking with his doctor, Jim began to better understand what was happening and how to manage it. That meant medication. A lot of it.

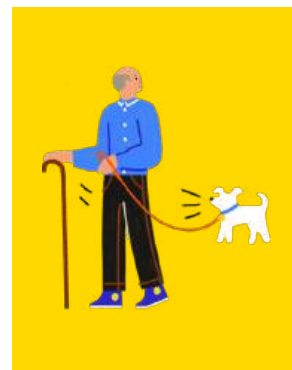
To simplify things, Jim built a routine that works for him: everything in the morning.

“It seems to be working, so I’m sticking with that,” he says.

But managing diabetes isn’t just about medication. It’s about everything surrounding it. Jim is actively trying to improve his strength and mobility.

“I’m trying to exercise more, get out, do things,” he says. “My muscles are weak, and it’s hard to stand up sometimes, so I’m working on that.”

There are also ongoing complications. Jim has diabetic retinopathy, a condition that requires regular eye injections every four to seven weeks.



**“I feel lucky.
The meds are helping me,
and they’re working.”**

Through medication adherence support with Scene Health, Jim found something he didn’t expect: Consistent human connection.

“I’m appreciating the nurses,” he says. “It’s like somebody else cares, and that helps a lot. It keeps me going.”

When Jim needed a new blood glucose monitor, the program guided him to the right next step—connecting with his doctor, who was able to provide one. When he had questions about an X-ray for his hip, they helped him navigate that, as well.

It wasn’t about replacing his care team. It was about reinforcing it to give Jim direction, clarity, and a sense that he wasn’t managing everything alone.

“I feel like I’m lucky,” he says. “The meds are helping me, and they’re working.”

These stories show the difference medication adherence support can make to individuals and their families. Let’s consider how those benefits and more can impact rural healthcare.

[Scene]

5 Ways Medication Adherence Support Drives Value

“Drugs do not work in patients who do not take them.”

Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop

When delivered effectively as remote individual care, this approach creates immense value for rural individuals and their communities.

1 Delivering Better Outcomes for Burdensome Diseases + Conditions

When individuals take their medication as prescribed, they’re much more likely to prevent their health from worsening or to recover altogether. We regularly see success stories for rural health issues like obesity, type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, mental health, and opioid treatment.



2 Augmenting the Rural Healthcare Workforce

A rural community doesn’t have to build its own program with limited staff and resources. A program like Scene Health provides highly credentialed staff and well-maintained technology infrastructure that extend the rural workforce model.

3 Enabling Home-Based Care

When implemented remotely the way Scene Health is, rural residents don’t have to worry about the time and expense of traveling to an appointment. They also experience more privacy, avoiding the stigma many rural residents can feel when seeking help. At the same time, the rural healthcare system doesn’t have to provide offices for appointments.

4 Reducing Strain on the Rural Healthcare System

When individuals are managing conditions like type-2 diabetes, obesity, and high cholesterol effectively, they are less likely to have to visit an emergency room, call 911, or use other emergency services. They also are less likely to require expensive medical treatments or interventions like surgery.

5 Achieving ROI through Compounding Impact

The benefits above combine to create a sizable return on investing in medication adherence support. As Health Affairs has noted, “Improving medication adherence thus offers one of those rare opportunities in healthcare to achieve multiple desired endpoints from the same policy.” At Scene Health, we see the ROI ratio as high as 2:1.

As pioneers of remote medication adherence support, we have deep insight into what makes it most effective. Let’s take a look at some key lessons learned.

[Scene]

3 Lessons Learned, from Uganda to Mississippi

Since 2009, we have developed and implemented medication adherence support in the most remote locations around the world—and in the face of extreme infrastructure challenges, like the aftermath of a hurricane. These lessons stand out.

1 Nothing Replaces Seeing the Dose Taken

The only way to know whether someone is adhering to their medication prescription or plan is to watch them take the medicine. Known as directly observed therapy (DOT), it's the standard of care for medication administration in clinical settings.

That standard doesn't have to compromise in rural settings. Scene Health has developed and refined video DOT (vDOT), where individuals and clinicians exchange Snapchat-like videos. We have not only seen positive outcomes directly, but we also have participated in more than 30 clinical trials and peer-reviewed studies that validate its effectiveness. In fact, CDC considers vDOT as equivalent to DOT to tuberculosis, which requires complex treatment- and often in rural settings.



2 Behind Every Adherent Individual Is a Human Connection

This connection means even more in rural communities where residents can experience social isolation. When individuals feel seen because their concerns are addressed, their questions are answered, and their well being is prioritized, they are much more likely to be adherent.

That's why, in addition to our innovative technology, we made a highly qualified and trained care team part of the Scene Health approach early on. Over the years, we have refined protocols, tools, and materials that empower the care team to give individuals a positive and rewarding experience. And this shows not only in our high adherence rates, such as 83% for diabetes, but also our high satisfaction ratings.

3 The Right Technology Delivers Connection Across Any Distance and Schedule

Technology is crucial to medication adherence support in rural areas, but it can't be just any technology. For a wide range of individuals, the technology must be easy to access and use or else it becomes a new barrier. Participants as young as 8 and as old as 85 have used the Scene Health mobile app (Spotlight) successfully, for instance.

One key to this success is our focus on asynchronous video, where participants record themselves taking their medication and share it through the app. Our care team views the video, then sends a personalized video reply. Participants not only find asynchronous video convenient, but they also feel more comfortable asking questions and fully explaining challenges or concerns than they would in a live session. This context gives the care team valuable insight to optimize their support.

With the potential of medication adherence support in mind, let's turn to specific considerations for making the business case in rural healthcare.

[Scene]

12 Tips for Making the Business Case for Medication Adherence Support

Building a successful case requires aligning clinical need, financial outcomes, and operational feasibility for rural communities. To that end, consider the following tips.

1. Start With the Region's Most Pressing Health Burdens

Anchor your case in the conditions driving the highest cost and poorest outcomes locally (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, obesity).

2. Position Adherence as a Lever for Value-Based Performance

Explicitly connect medication adherence to shared savings, quality metrics (e.g., HEDIS, STAR), and risk contracts.

3. Quantify the Cost of Inaction

Model the risk. Estimate avoidable hospitalizations, readmissions, and downstream costs if adherence gaps persist.

4. Demonstrate Speed to Impact or Value

Make it clear how quickly a turnkey solution can be deployed and begin improving adherence rates, especially compared to building programs internally.

5. Tie the Program to Specific, Measurable Outcomes

Define success in concrete terms such as improved adherence rates, reduced acute events, increased retention in care, and cost offsets within a defined timeframe.

6. Build a Full-Spectrum ROI Case

Look beyond direct medical savings. Include workforce efficiency, avoided infrastructure costs, improved quality scores, and long-term population health gains.



[Scene]

12 Tips for Making the Business Case for Medication Adherence Support

Building a successful case requires aligning clinical need, financial outcomes, and operational feasibility for rural communities. To that end, consider the following tips.

7. Show How the Model Works in Resource-Constrained Settings

Reassure decision-makers that this approach is designed for rural realities such as limited staff, transportation barriers, and dispersed populations.

8. Emphasize Workforce Relief, Not Burden

Position the program as a way to extend care teams rather than strain them.

9. Highlight Scalability Without Proportional Cost Growth

Once implemented, the model can expand across counties or populations without linear increases in cost or staffing.

10. Bring Proof From Comparable Settings

Examples or case studies from similar rural or underserved regions, even internationally, can be powerful.

11. Align With Funding Priorities and Compliance Requirements

Explicitly map your program to the goals of rural healthcare transformation funds (e.g., access, equity, cost control, outcomes).

12. Frame It as Infrastructure, Not a Pilot

Avoid positioning this as a short-term experiment. Present it as care delivery infrastructure that strengthens the system for the long term.

These tips and the Opportunity Assessment Worksheet can strengthen your case for medication adherence support. As you explore solutions, consider what makes Scene Health unique.

[Scene]

The Scene Health Difference for Rural Communities

Through a decade of implementation with more than 750 clients around the U.S., we carefully honed a unique system that delivers breakthrough medication support and achieves outstanding outcomes like these.



80-90%
Avg Adherence
Rate



\$3-6 K
Avg Savings Per
Individual



26%
Drop in ED Visits +
Inpatient Stays

Scene Health works with the realities of rural healthcare because it's easy to deploy, delivers multiple proven interventions in one program, and addresses the top rural health burdens.

Turnkey Solution: Team + Technology

Scene Health is a ready-to-deploy solution that takes care of the operational details for you—from recruiting individuals to implementing medication support to measuring impact and beyond. Scene Health extends your workforce and infrastructure by providing a specialized care team and technology.



End-to-End Solution

Start to Finish

We handle all components of medication adherence support.

Low Lift

We provide the people and technology



Highly Trained Care Team

The Right Staff

We bring together nurses, health coaches, and pharmacists.

The Right Focus

Staff have specialized training in medication adherence support.



Technology That Works

Mobile App for Patients

It's user friendly, multilingual, and works in low band width.

Platform for Care Team

It enables care management and connection with EHRs.



[Scene]

MedEngagement: 360° Approach

Only Scene Health provides MedEngagement, where individuals and the care team connect frequently and effectively to achieve adherence. One program delivers multiple proven interventions.

 **Human Connection**

166 Touchpoints / Patient

Our care team connects frequently with individuals through asynchronous video and chat.

 **Effective Interventions**

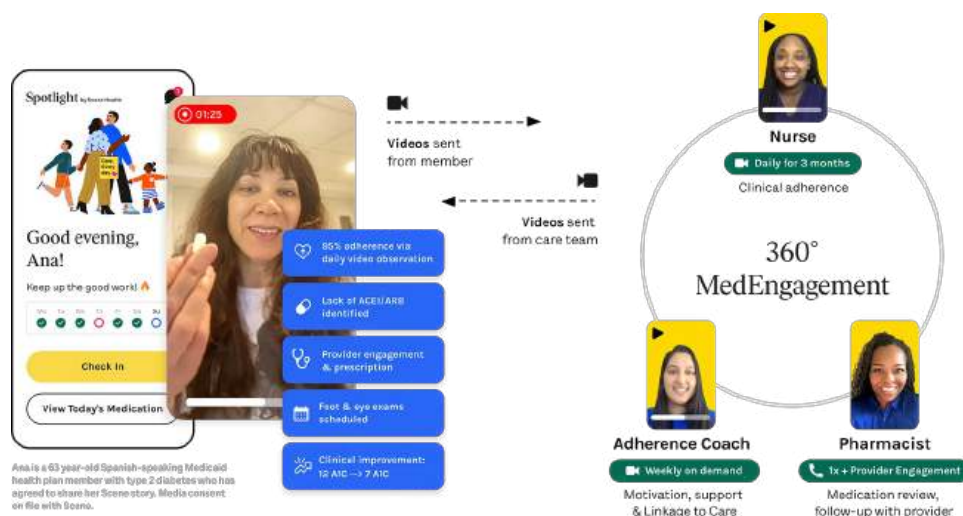
1 Program: Many Techniques

Combines medication review, video directly observed therapy, linkage to care, and education.

 **Clinically Validated**

30+ Publications

Proven to work in more than 30 clinical trials and peer-reviewed studies across many conditions.



Time to Lasting Adherence: Months, Not Years

Individuals participate for an average of three months, establishing positive habits that can last a lifetime. Scene Health gives repeatable value quickly.

 **Starting with Trust**

7 Video Exchanges

We build rapport quickly. Most individuals commit after 7 video communications.

 **Helpful Habits**

Check In with Each Dose

Patients get into a routine of taking medication. We see any challenges and help solve them.

“Taking my medication and sharing progress with my team helped me build a habit. That consistency is key. I enjoyed connecting with my Scene family [who were] offering encouragement.”

Scene Health Participant

[Scene]

Coverage: Top Health Burdens in Rural Communities

Scene Health supports medication adherence for a wide range of diseases and conditions, including the top burdens in rural healthcare

- ▶ Type 2 Diabetes
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ High Blood Pressure
- ▶ Asthma
- ▶ High Cholesterol
- ▶ Opioid Use Disorder
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ HIV / HCV

Experience: 750+ Clients Across the Healthcare Landscape

Healthcare providers, public health agencies, and health systems rank among our clients.



Ready to deliver breakthrough outcomes for the communities that need it most?

Medication adherence is the difference. Partner with Scene Health to make it happen.

www.scene.health/contact

[Scene]

Opportunity Assessment Worksheet

Medication Adherence Support for Rural Healthcare

Use this worksheet to clarify the need, approach, and potential impact for your region.

The Challenge

▶ Top Disease + Condition Burdens: _____

▶ Priority Populations: _____

▶ Key Consequences Today: _____

The Opportunity

▶ Outcomes That Could Change: _____

▶ Metrics Tied to Funding or Value-Based Care: _____

▶ Wins within 3-6 Months: _____

The Potential Impact and ROI

▶ Target Outcomes: _____

▶ Financial Impact: _____

The Solution Fit

▶ Key Barriers: _____

▶ How Remote Support Addresses Barriers: _____

▶ Expected Time to Deploy: _____

Sustainability

▶ Path to Ongoing Funding: _____

▶ Potential to Scale Across Populations or Regions: _____

▶ Integrating into Care Delivery: _____

In 2-3 sentences, summarize your case: _____

We're available to collaborate on the opportunity and shape an approach tailored to your region.

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[Scene]

Executive Summary

Transforming Rural Healthcare

The Challenge:

Improving Health Outcomes in U.S. Rural Communities

At least **46 million people live in rural areas**, but they experience higher rates of

- ♥ Hypertension and obesity.
- ♥ Cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory illness.
- ♥ Suicide and drug overdose deaths.

They also experience a **20% higher age-adjusted death rate**.

The contributing challenges include:

- ♥ **Care Deserts:** 80% of counties have a care desert.
- ♥ **Staff Shortages:** The ratio of primary physicians to people is 30:100,000.
- ♥ **Transportation:** Lack of public options, extended drive times, high fuel costs.
- ♥ **Social Isolation + Stigma:** Lack of options or support for mental health.

The Opportunity:

Medication Adherence for Rural Communities

Individuals get prescriptions for their conditions—but up to 50% don't follow them, increasing their risk and costing the U.S. \$528.4 billion annually. When individuals take their medications as prescribed, the benefits can include reducing costly complications, readmissions, and acute events; reducing the burden on emergency services; and improving long-term cost trajectories.

The Breakthrough:

Remote Medication Adherence Support

How can every individual get the right support to take their medications correctly, no matter where they live? Our pursuit of an answer to this crucial question led us to pioneer the Scene Health solution. Over the past decade, more than 750 U.S. customers have participated, achieving outcomes like these.



80-90%
Avg Adherence
Rate



\$3-6 K
Avg Savings Per
Individual



26%
Drop in ED Visits +
Inpatient Stays

Scene Health started in the most remote places around the world such as Uganda and Colombia, so the solution works for the realities of rural healthcare in the U.S.

What's Next

- Complete the Opportunity Assessment worksheet to understand the potential.
- Use the 12 tips to accelerate making the business case.
- Collaborate with Scene Health to propose and implement the solution.

[Scene]

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