

OSF HealthCare Offering Digital Solutions to Screen for Novel Coronavirus

by Jeff Allsman, Executive Director
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PEORIA - OSF HealthCare has launched an updated digital solution to help educate and triage people who are concerned about COVID-19.

Clare, the virtual assistant chatbot on the home page of OSF HealthCare, is now equipped to screen for and educate the public about COVID-19.

“OSF HealthCare wants to reduce anxiety during this uncertain time with the COVID-19 situation,” said Abby Lotz, vice president, OSF Saint Gabriel Digital Care. “To ease concerns, we are encouraging the public to use Clare, our virtual assistant to get the most up to date information, share symptoms, and more. Clare provides a safe experience for consumers to access medical professionals without the need to travel to a facility and risk possible exposure.”

Launched in December 2019, Clare was updated in March to provide screening and education directly related to COVID-19. The chatbot will listen for symptoms of COVID-19 and ask relevant follow-up questions, such as travel history, and whether a person is aware if they’ve been exposed to others with the illness. If necessary, Clare will direct patients to a newly established triage line. Staffed 24/7, community members who are symptomatic or considered at-risk will be able to access trained medical professionals at no cost for advice on testing and care.

“As we strive to flatten the curve, this is a way to provide answers and assessments without the need for people to come to our facilities,” Lotz said. “We can meet people where they are and provide different ways for people to access us. We’re aligning ourselves with what we see is the communities’ communication preferences. People are on their phones, tablets and computers more often. Clare provides a digital front door, available 24/7 at their fingertips.”

Lotz said it’s a challenge for people to know which type of care is best because people aren’t trained medically to triage their cough or fever. “We believe this innovative solution for patients will be extremely helpful for everyone in the communities we serve to better prepare for and protect themselves from the spread of COVID-19.”

Clare will continuously be updated based on guidelines from the Center of Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. Clare can be used on Firefox, Chrome, and mobile browsers but does not work in Internet Explorer. If your browser has a pop-up blocker, it will need to be turned off before Clare will be activated.

In addition to Clare, the virtual assistant chatbot on osfhealthcare.org, OSF HealthCare has launched a second digital solution to educate and triage people who are concerned about COVID-19.

OSF COVID Companion is a free text messaging tool that the public can use to receive guidance about COVID-19. The text messaging program links users with key recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Departments

of Public Health in Illinois and Michigan. To subscribe, users can text OSF to 67634. OSF COVID Companion will then ask basic questions to provide information tailored to each individual user. Subscribers will receive educational tips for preventing or addressing COVID-19, as well as ways to connect with public health resources in their local area.

“OSF HealthCare wants to reduce anxiety during this uncertain time and make it easier for people to get the information and support they need,” said Jennifer Junis, senior vice president, OSF Saint Gabriel Digital Health. “The public deserves quick access to the most up-to-date, relevant information for their personal health situations. The OSF COVID Companion is a simple way to get daily updates delivered straight to your phone.”

OSF COVID Companion is designed to be used for anyone, healthy or sick. It does not require a download or login. For more information, visit www.caresignal.health/covid/osf-healthcare.