

The Adoption of Telehealth

The nationwide lockdowns in states due to the COVID-19 pandemic spurred exponential growth in the use of telehealth by both health care providers and patients. While much of the world is returning to pre-pandemic normalcy, the integration of telehealth into the American healthcare landscape is here to stay. The ATA supports legislation that makes it easier for patients, providers, and plans to access and provide telehealth services.



- By April of 2020, **nearly all** primary care physicians (97%) were using telemedicine to treat patients.¹
- Telehealth claim lines **increased 2980% nationally** from September 2019 to September 2020.²
- 93% of patients say they would **be likely to use telemedicine to manage prescriptions**.³
- 83% of patients say they are **likely to continue using telemedicine** after COVID-19.⁴
- More than three-quarters of physicians surveyed said **telemedicine helped them provide better care** for patients.⁵
- The number of patients reporting at least one telehealth visit has **increased by 57%** since the start of the pandemic. Patients with chronic illnesses report a **77% increase** in the use of telehealth.⁶
- Telehealth use by rural health centers increased during the pandemic, **peaking at 54%** in the last week of April—well above the 0.4% reported in 2019.⁷
- Medicare beneficiaries using telehealth exploded from just 13,000/week before the pandemic to 1.7 million/week. In total, **over 9 million beneficiaries received a telehealth service** during the first 4 months of the public health emergency.⁸
- Cleveland Clinic is expecting **20 percent of visits to remain remote** in 2021, while **30 to 40 percent remain remote** at Stanford Healthcare despite the system resuming in-person visits.⁹

Remaining Barriers

- **Reimbursement challenges top the list of physician-cited barriers to maintaining telehealth after COVID-19, followed by technology challenges for patients, and liability concerns.**¹⁰
- **Nearly two-thirds of physicians said lack of integration with EHRs would be a barrier to their own adoption of telehealth services.**¹¹
- **39.7% of consumers say their health system or insurance provider does not offer telehealth services, while another 34.6% said they are unaware if any service is offered.**¹²

1. Joshua Weisbrod, Michael Brookshire, and Erin Ney, MD, *US Doctors Turn to Telehealth As COVID-19 Limits In-Person Care*, Bain & Company, April 17, 2020.

2. Robin Gelburd, *Telehealth Claim Lines Rise 2980% in One-Year Period Through September 2020*, *American Journal of Managed Care*, December 1, 2020.

3. *Telemedicine Adoption in the Age of COVID-19 and Beyond*, *Doctor.com*, 2020.

4. *Telemedicine Adoption in the Age of COVID-19 and Beyond*, *Doctor.com*, 2020.

5. *Telehealth Impact Study: Physician Survey*, COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition, Nov. 16, 2020. Workgroup includes: American Medical Association, American Telemedicine Association, Digital Medical Society, Massachusetts Health Quality Partners, MassChallenge Health Tech, Mayo Clinic, and MITRE Corporation.

6. *State of Telemedicine Report; Examining Patient Perspectives and Physician Adoption of Telemedicine Since the COVID-19 Pandemic*, *Doximity*, September, 2020.

7. James Hernandez, Feygele Jacobs, Peter Shin, *Community Health Center Telehealth Utilization in Rural and Urban States During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, *RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative*, November 10, 2020.

8. "Early Impact of CMS Expansion Of Medicare Telehealth During COVID-19," *Health Affairs Blog*, July 15, 2020.

9. Hannah Mitchell, *What data reveals about the future of telehealth after the pandemic*, *Becker's Hospital Review*, March 29, 2021.

10. *Telehealth Impact Study: Physician Survey*, COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition, Nov. 16, 2020.

11. *Telehealth Impact Study: Physician Survey*, COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition, Nov. 16, 2020.

12. J.D. Power, *2020 U.S. Telehealth Satisfaction Study*, October 1, 2020.