Telehealth use, which surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, has provided a way for physicians to provide care while keeping patients safe in their homes. These services also protected health care staff and safeguarded resources such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

To explore health care providers’ experiences with telehealth, the COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition recently conducted a survey of 1,594 clinicians across the country. The findings of the Telehealth Impact Study highlight the wide expansion of telehealth services in many specialty areas, high levels of satisfaction with the services and a look at barriers that could affect the continued use and improvement of these services.

Survey key findings

The survey responses show that telehealth is positively influencing four important telehealth goals:

Clinical outcomes

- More than 75% of clinicians responding to the survey indicated that telehealth enabled them to provide quality care in the areas of COVID-19-related care, acute care, chronic disease management, hospital/ED follow-up, care coordination, preventative care and mental/behavioral health.
- Additionally, 60% of clinicians reported that telehealth has improved the health of their patients.
  - Of those using telehealth, 80% are conducting live, interactive video visits with patients and 67.9% are doing audio-only visits.
  - Sixty-eight percent (agree and strongly agree) of respondents are motivated to increase telehealth use in their practices.

Patient experience

- More than 80% of respondents indicated that telehealth improved the timeliness of care for
their patients. A similar percentage said that their patients have reacted favorably to using telehealth for care.

Cost

Respondents indicated that telehealth improved the costs of care for their patients (61% either agreeing or strongly agreeing) and improved the financial health of their practices (56% either agreeing or strongly agreeing).

Professional satisfaction

A majority of respondents indicated that telehealth has improved the satisfaction of their work (55%).

About the survey

The Telehealth Impact Study clinicians’ survey was designed to characterize the experiences and attitudes of physicians and other frontline clinicians during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Telehealth Impact Study goal is to support the decisions of medical practices, payers and government regulators in the months ahead as we create a new normal for clinical care.

The provider survey was developed by members of the COVID-19 Telehealth Impact Study Work Group* of the COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition. The survey was informed by prior work in this area, including surveys developed by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA).

*The COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition Telehealth Workgroup includes: American Medical Association (AMA), American Telemedicine Association (ATA), Digital Medical Society (DiMe), MassChallenge Health Tech, Mayo Clinic, and MITRE Corporation. The AMA, while a part of the Coalition Telehealth Workgroup, is not a formal member of the COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition.

AMA digital health care 2016 & 2019 study findings

Digital health encompasses a broad scope of tools that can improve health care, enable lifestyle change and create operational efficiencies. This includes digital solutions involving telemedicine and telehealth, mHealth, wearables, remote monitoring, apps and others. Read more about the 2016 and 2019 digital health care study findings of physicians’ motivations and requirements for the adoption of digital clinical tools.

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/digital/telehealth-resource-center-research-findings
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