

# New survey data shows doctors' steadfast commitment to telehealth

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**What's the news:** The vast majority of doctors—85%—are still using telehealth to deliver patient care and most, 70%, said their organization is motivated to continue using this form of virtual care in their practice, according to an AMA survey of more than 2,300 physicians.

Many physicians foresee providing telehealth services for chronic disease management and ongoing medical management, care coordination, mental/behavioral health, and specialty care.

The survey comes as Congress recently extended the availability of telehealth for Medicare patients beyond the current COVID-19 public health emergency. Additional action by Congress will be needed to permanently provide access to Medicare telehealth services.

Read more about how telehealth flexibilities were assured for the bulk of 2022.

**Why it's important:** As physicians and practices plan to expand telehealth services, they say widespread adoption hinges on preventing a return to the previous lack of insurance coverage and payment. Payers, both public and private, should continue to evaluate and improve policies, coverage and payment rates for services provided via telehealth.

“Physicians view telehealth as providing quality care to their patients, and policymakers and payers have come to the same conclusion. Patients will benefit immensely from this new era of improved access to care,” said AMA President Gerald E. Harmon, MD. “This survey shows adoption of the technology is widespread as is the demand for continued access. It is critical that Congress takes action and makes permanent telehealth access for Medicare patients.”

Physicians strongly support that audio-only telehealth that happens by telephone remain covered in the future to ensure equitable access. That coverage has been permitted during the public health emergency and extended for several months afterward.

According to the survey, 95% of physicians reported that patients are primarily home at the time of the virtual visit. Allowing patients to be in their home is a key component of making telehealth more accessible. Before the pandemic, Medicare patients needed to be physically located in a rural area to access telehealth services, shutting out urban and suburban patients from receiving the same benefits of virtual care.

Pre-pandemic, rural patients also needed to travel to an “originating site,” essentially another health care facility, outside of their home to access telehealth services. The temporary extension in the omnibus will allow patients with Medicare to receive telehealth services anywhere they are located, including in their home. The AMA will continue to urge Congress to make permanent this and other policies that have offered coverage and convenience to patients.

The AMA survey is packed with many other findings of interest. For example, of the physicians surveyed:

- More than 80% said patients have better access to care since using telehealth.
- 62% believe patients have higher satisfaction since offering telehealth.
- 60% agreed telehealth enabled them to provide high-quality care.
- 56% are motivated to increase telehealth use in their practices.
- 44% indicated that telehealth decreased the costs of care.

**Learn more:** Download the complete, 43-page 2021 telehealth survey report from the AMA (PDF). Also, discover the great telehealth resources the AMA help guide physician practices through the successful implementation of telehealth and remote patient monitoring.

Meanwhile, the AMA Telehealth Immersion Program offers a comprehensive curriculum and enhanced experience to help physicians navigate the world of telehealth alongside peers nationwide through a series of curated webinars, interactive peer-to-peer learning sessions, virtual discussions and bootcamps.