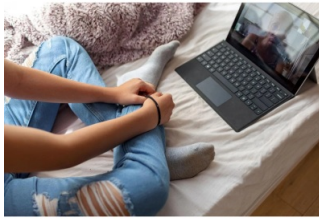

AMA Survey Shows Widespread Enthusiasm for Telehealth



An American Medical Association (AMA) [survey](#) shows physicians have enthusiastically embraced telehealth and expect to use it even more in the future.

Nearly 85% of physician respondents indicated they are currently using telehealth to care for patients, and nearly 70% report their organization is motivated to continue using telehealth in their practice. 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.

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 little to no payer reimbursement. 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, M.D. "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 telehealth via audio-only/telephone remains 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 report patients are primarily located at their 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. Before the pandemic, rural patients 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.

Fewer than half of respondents report being able to access all of their telehealth platforms via their electronic health records, and more than 75% report that their support technology does not automatically collect and deliver patient-reported data. Improving interoperability between platforms and support technology would improve and streamline telehealth services.

Physicians perceive technology, digital literacy, and broadband internet access to be the top three patient barriers to using telehealth. In addition, only 8% of physician respondents said they were using remote patient monitoring at this time. The AMA will advocate for patient populations and communities with limited access to telehealth service, including but not limited to, supporting increased funding and planning for telehealth infrastructure such as broadband and internet-connected devices.

Read the survey [here](#).

Source: [American Medical Association \(AMA\)](#).

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