
Telehealth Follow-up Compares Well to In-Person Care For Chronic Conditions



A Johns Hopkins University study compared in-person and telehealth ambulatory encounter outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic's first year. They found that telehealth follow-ups compared equally well to in-person visits outcomes for chronic conditions.

Telehealth services in the U.S. have expanded since the beginning of the pandemic to provide an alternative to in-person care without risking COVID-19 exposure. Health insurance coverage also expanded to cover this modality of provider care delivery. Given the scarcity of studies evaluating telehealth outcomes of care, researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and collaborators from Blue Health Intelligence and the Digital Medicine Society compared clinically relevant outcomes from telehealth and in-person encounters using data from 41 million commercially insured adults with private Blue Cross Blue Shield plans.

They found that patients with acute clinical conditions who first sought care by telehealth were more likely to have a follow-up, an emergency department visit, or an in-patient admission. The researchers wrote: 'This trend was observed especially for acute respiratory-related conditions, which potentially could be confounded by concerns over COVID-19 rather than the less complicated acute non-COVID-19 diagnosis.' However, follow-ups were fewer for patients with chronic conditions that initially sought care by telehealth.

The study's authors conclude: 'These findings suggest a direction for future work and are relevant to policy makers, payers, and practitioners as they manage the use of telehealth during the pandemic and afterward.'

Source: [JAMA Network Open](#)

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