

Qualitative Study of Telehealth

Findings from 2022 data collection of payers,
providers, and service recipients

Methods

- Interviews with three groups:
 - Payers (n=16, representing 5 prominent payer organizations)
 - Providers (n=20)
 - Service recipients (n=30)

Research questions

- How has the expansion of telehealth impacted patients, providers, and payers?
 - Access to care
 - Quality of care
 - Health outcomes
 - Patient satisfaction
- To what extent has the expansion of telehealth helped to reduce disparities in access to health care?
- To what extent can telehealth act as a substitute for in-person care?
- What are provider and payer perspectives of payment for services?

Findings: Access to care

- Overall, telehealth increased access to care and reduced key barriers to care
 - Ability to see a wider range of providers (notably, specialists)
 - Reduced barriers:
 - Transportation
 - Child care
 - Scheduling (i.e. challenge taking time off work)
- Increased access has positive impact on disparities
 - However, access is not equitable due to barriers associated with geography and socioeconomic status

Findings: Challenges with access to care

The key challenges associated with telehealth are technology and connectivity. These issues are exacerbated for Minnesotans who:

- Live outside the Twin Cities metro area
- Are older
- Have lower incomes

One of my biggest challenges, particularly in rural Minnesota, is there are several places that just don't have broadband or great cellular access...until that's addressed, we're never really going to have equity, even with telehealth capabilities. So we've got to find ways to address that. –Provider



Findings: Care delivery and outcomes

- Service recipients are more engaged in their care
 - Increased follow-through
- Telehealth works best for certain kinds of care:
 - Chronic illness (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, or asthma)
 - Mental health care
 - Follow-up care (i.e. from a procedure or new treatment plan)
 - Medication management
 - Established patients

Findings: Satisfaction with telehealth

- Both providers and service recipients expressed high levels of satisfaction with telehealth, noting convenience and flexibility as key reasons.
- Providers also commented on the benefit regarding staff and building capacity.

Many of our clinicians have chosen to do [virtual care] for a variety of reasons. In some of our areas, that's actually been a way that we can see more patients because if we can shift our clinician resources offsite, that frees up capacity in our brick and mortar space to be able to bring patients in for in-person care. –Provider



Findings: Perspectives of payment

- Payers are hesitant about mandated payment parity, and would like to have the ability to be creative in approaches to payment
- Providers support payment parity and feel that it enhances equitable access to care
- Service recipients want continued insurance coverage for telehealth

We're doing a good job calling patients' phones if they don't show up for their video visits. So the majority of the time my no-show rate for telehealth is significantly lower compared to my no-show rate for in-person appointments because we're meeting people where they are, talking about their needs. -Provider

Recommendations from respondents

- Continue to make both telehealth and in-person care available
- Support expansion of broadband throughout the state
- Provide clarity about payment for services
- Develop guidelines for telehealth best practices
- Promote telehealth as a quality option for patients
- Conduct additional research on the clinical effectiveness of telehealth

Questions?

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