

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has left the nation's healthcare system grappling with a widespread public health crisis on a scale not seen since the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918¹. The highly contagious nature of the coronavirus has made frontline healthcare workers, including Physicians, Physician Assistants, and Nurse Practitioners, dangerously vulnerable to contracting the virus themselves² as they provide care to the over 1.25 million Americans seeking treatment³.



"This challenging situation right now has shown how telehealth can help us provide the right care in the right setting at the right time for people, one of those silver linings during this difficult time for all of us."

—DR. GEOFFREY LEUNG, RIVERSIDE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM⁴

Fortunately for HCPs, the expansion of telehealth, or telemedicine, has shifted into hyper-drive in response to the pandemic. To expand patient and provider access, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, as well as many private insurers, have moved swiftly to waive the reimbursement restrictions, interstate regulations, and out-of-pocket costs that have historically acted as barriers to telehealth's widespread adoption⁵. As a result, prominent healthcare systems throughout the country have reported unprecedented surges in telehealth encounters, with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) for example reporting a 35-fold increase from March to April 2020⁶.



"COVID-19 has changed everything. Because of COVID-19 we have all of this distance and it has accelerated all of these ideas and it's totally exploded our thinking around what we can do with telemedicine in primary care."

—DR. MARK HENDERSON, UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE⁴

The response to COVID-19 will likely permanently entrench telehealth services on the frontlines of patient care. For our latest MedData Point Infographic, 275 US Physicians, Physician Assistants, and Nurse Practitioners shared their thoughts on the impact of the expansion of telehealth related technology on their practices, patients, and prescribing behaviors both now and in the future.

89% of HCPs reported that their medical practice or healthcare system now utilizes telehealth services to provide patient care.

WHEN ASKED:

"Does your practice or healthcare system utilize telehealth services to treat patients?"

RESPONSES WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Yes, we adopted the technology due to COVID-19

72%

Yes, we utilized the technology prior to COVID-19

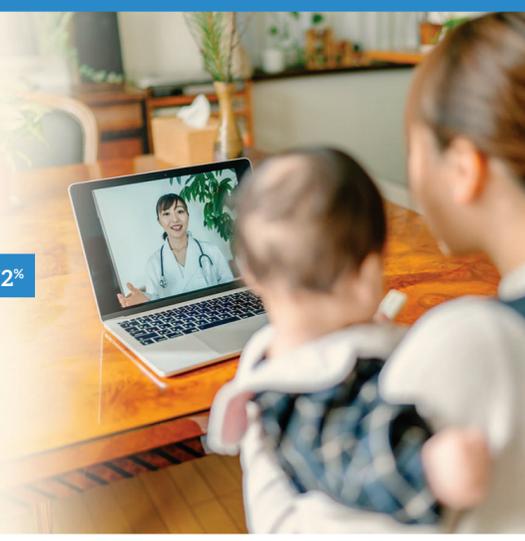
17%

No, but we are considering adopting the technology

6%

No, we do not see patients via telehealth

5%



Only 15% of surveyed HCPs reported personally experiencing difficulty using telehealth technologies, while 42% perceived usability issues among their patients during visits.

WHEN ASKED:

"Which of the following describes the experience of your practice or healthcare system with telehealth platforms?"

RESPONSES WERE AS FOLLOWS:

I have found the technologies easy to use

53%

My colleagues and staff have found the technologies easy to use

42%

Patients have found the technologies easy to use

31%

I have had difficulty using the technologies

15%

My colleagues and staff have had difficulty using the technologies

16%

Patients have had difficulty using the technologies

42%

N/A (We do not see patients via telehealth)

10%



53% of Specialists plan to continue expanding, or at least maintain current levels of telehealth services offered to patients compared with 43% of PCPs.

WHEN ASKED:

"Post COVID-19, how do you forecast the utilization of telehealth services within your practice or healthcare system?"

RESPONSES WERE AS FOLLOWS:

We will continue to expand the use of telehealth services

42%

We will provide telehealth services at current levels

10%

We will scale back the use of telehealth services

38%

We do not plan to offer telehealth services in the future

11%



75% of HCPs reported being just as comfortable, or only slightly less comfortable, writing prescriptions based on telehealth patient visits.

WHEN ASKED:

"What is your comfort level with prescribing based on telehealth patient visits?"

RESPONSES WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Same as in-person visit

25%

Slightly less comfortable than in-person

50%

Significantly less comfortable than in-person

26%



What our surveyed HCPs had to say about telehealth:

"We're using telemedicine technology to do family-centered in-patient NICU rounding. Parents and staff are very comfortable with the process and love to be part of the cutting-edge technology."

—NURSE PRACTITIONER, NEONATAL

"Will help in remote areas or for people with transport issues, or very stable patients who just need refills on meds."

—RHEUMATOLOGIST

"I feel like telemedicine is great for the current situation, but we will need to evaluate the appropriate use of it in the future. Which cases are appropriate? How often does a chronic disease patient need to be seen in person? What about controlled substance refills and urine drug testing? There are so many questions and uncertainties, but I do think telehealth is an important tool to continue to use moving forward."

—PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

"Rx confidence same as in person but we only Rx for existing patients and no narcotics."

—PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

"I love it. It is high time we adopted it in order to save needless trips to the clinic and to free up space/access for patients to see their primary physicians."

—INTERNIST

"Telemedicine is great but the biggest disadvantage is the use of new technology. Some platforms are easy to use, others are harder. Young people feel more comfortable than older generations."

—HOSPITALIST

"Telehealth allows for greater access to certain patient groups that might not be seen as often as they should be due to roadblocks in the way of them being seen between the conditions they have or their ability to leave the house easily. I think that telehealth should continue to be done post Covid-19 to allow us to better serve our patients."

—PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

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MedData Point is a market research program powered by MedData Group that collects and analyzes data to provide healthcare marketers with insights into the latest trends, technologies and perceptions in healthcare among physicians and other healthcare professionals and across a variety of specialties and practice sizes.

MedData Group, an IQVIA business, maintains a database of 4M+ HCPs that includes hundreds of dimensions of professional, behavioral and organizational data fueling omnichannel targeting and engagement at scale. MedData Group's industry-leading compliance quality data and platforms support sophisticated audience identification, accurate targeting, measurement and optimization of Programmatic, Email, Social, and Advanced TV campaigns.

1 <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/26/coronavirus-may-be-deadlier-than-1918-flu-heres-how-it-stacks-up-to-other-pandemics.html>
 2 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assessment-hcp.html>
 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>
 4 <https://www.kqed.org/science/1963133/telehealth-is-having-a-huge-moment-during-coronavirus-crisis>
 5 <https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/17/administration-expands-telemedicine-for-medicare-and-encourages-health-plans-to-boost-offerings/>
 6 <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/04/30/telemedicine-key-to-us-health-care-even-after-pandemic-ends/>