

Telehealth is Essential: Now and in the Future

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Disclosures

Gretchen C. Goltz, DO – Speaker

I have no relevant financial relationships to disclose.

Objectives

- Describe the appropriate uses of telehealth
- Explain strategies for providing telehealth services in primary care
- Identify the skills needed to engage in telehealth activities
- Share telehealth best practices to improve:
 - Patient access to healthcare
 - Coordination of care and gap closure
 - Patient and provider satisfaction



Telehealth: Where have we been?

1879

Article published in the Lancet talking about using the telephone to reduce unnecessary office visits

1906

The inventor of the electrocardiogram published a paper on telecardiogram.

1920's

Cover of Science and Invention magazine showed a doctor diagnosing a patient by radio. Radio has been used to give medical advice to clinics on ships.

1970's

STARPAHC Project: NASA pilot involving the Papago Tribe using technology to deliver health care to a remote population.

1958-1963

Mercury Space Program: NASA began physiologic monitoring over a distance.

1990's

Studies show value of tele-dermatology and behavioral health delivered through telehealth technologies.

Source: Nesbitt, Thomas, M.D., MPH. The Evolution of Telehealth: Where have we been and where are we going?, IOM, Washington, D.C., National Academies Press, November 20, 2012



What is telehealth?

Telehealth

Telehealth is the use of digital information and communication technologies, such as computers and mobile devices, to access health care services remotely and manage a patient's health care.

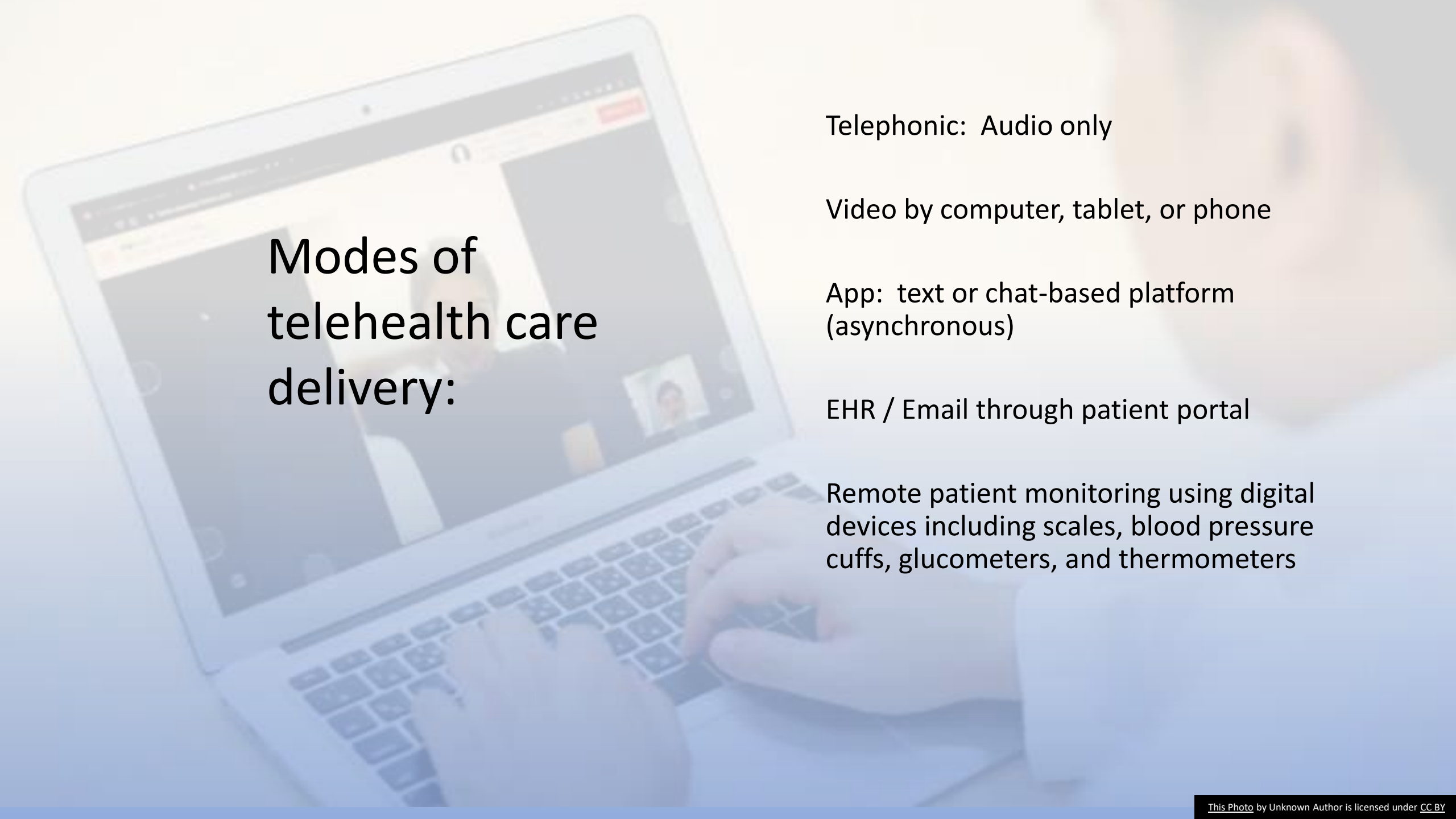


There are many terms synonymous with telehealth.

- Telemedicine
- Virtual Health
- Virtual Visit
- Virtual Care
- E-Visit
- Virtual Check-in
- Online Visit



What does
telehealth
look like?



Modes of telehealth care delivery:

Telephonic: Audio only

Video by computer, tablet, or phone

App: text or chat-based platform
(asynchronous)

EHR / Email through patient portal

Remote patient monitoring using digital devices including scales, blood pressure cuffs, glucometers, and thermometers

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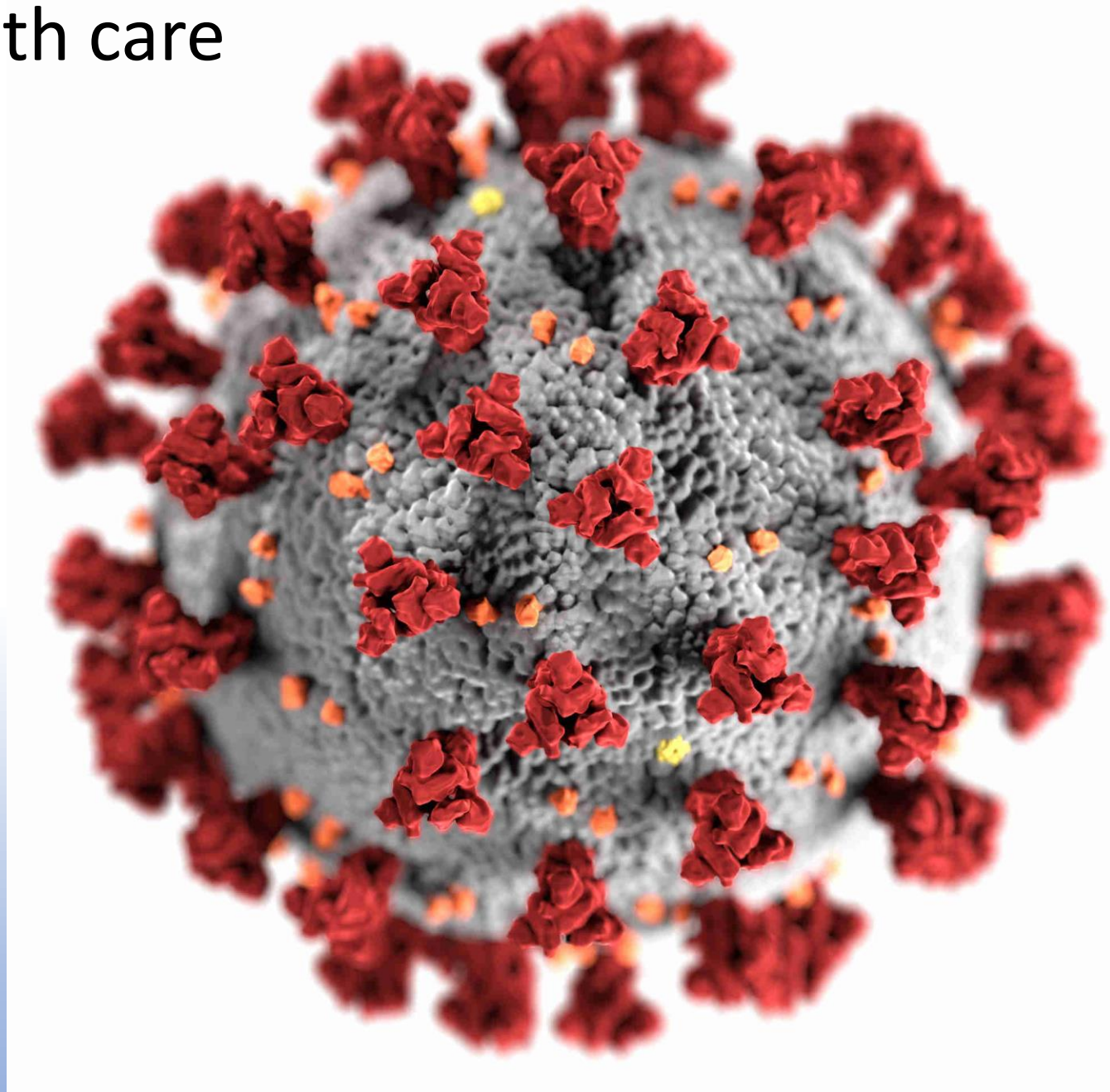


COVID-19 Impacts on health care delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the rapid adoption of telehealth associated with a shift in consumer's attitude toward virtual care.

Healthcare providers are integrating telehealth into the comprehensive care of patients.

- 80% of physicians have used telehealth during the pandemic.
- 70% of physicians expect to use telehealth in the next 3 years.



2021 American Medical Association Telehealth Survey:

Telehealth usage

Live audio-visual technology

- 93% of providers surveyed use live audio-visual technology to deliver telehealth.
- 69% of providers surveyed use telephone / audio-only calls with patients.
- A/V mode of telehealth is predominantly used to see patients at home.
- Other sites of care include outpatient and post-acute settings.
- Telephone and Zoom remain the primary platforms used to deliver virtual care.

Remote patient monitoring

- 8% of providers surveyed leverage RPM.
- Most RPM is used in the care of patients at home.

Asynchronous telehealth

- 12% of providers surveyed use asynchronous telehealth in patient care.
- Providers mainly used this mode of care for patient e-visits using store and forward, digital check-ins via patient portals, and emails.
- Physicians are also leveraging e-consults via asynchronous telehealth visits.

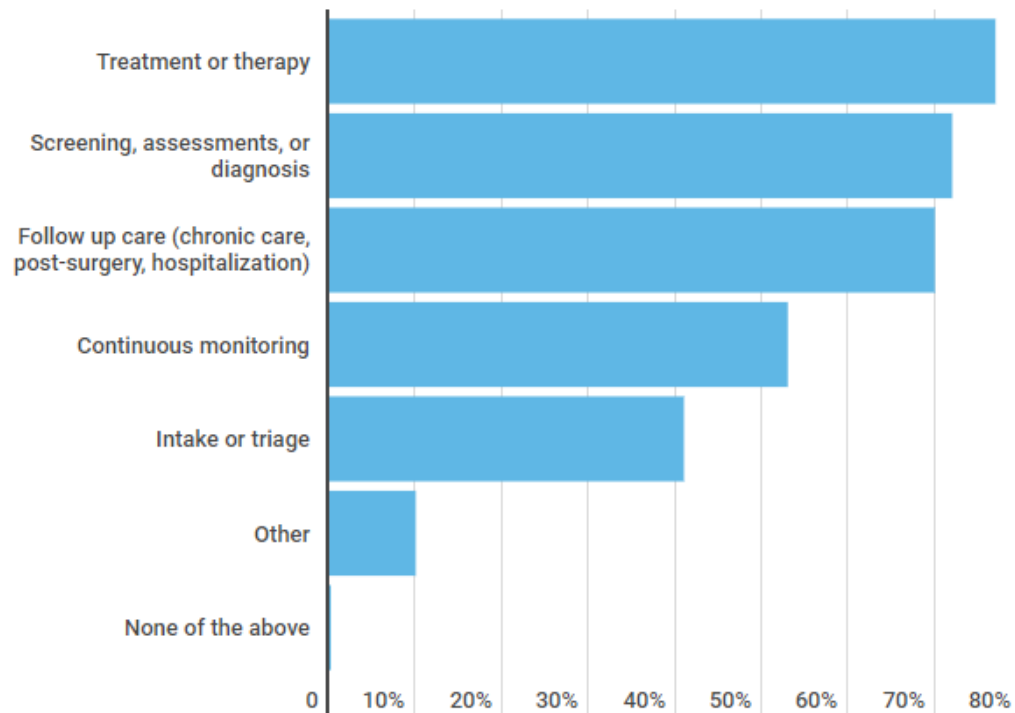


Telehealth Care Processes and Services

According to the American Medical Association 2021 Telehealth Survey Report, physicians are leveraging telehealth mainly for treatment or therapy, screenings, assessments or diagnoses, and follow-up care.

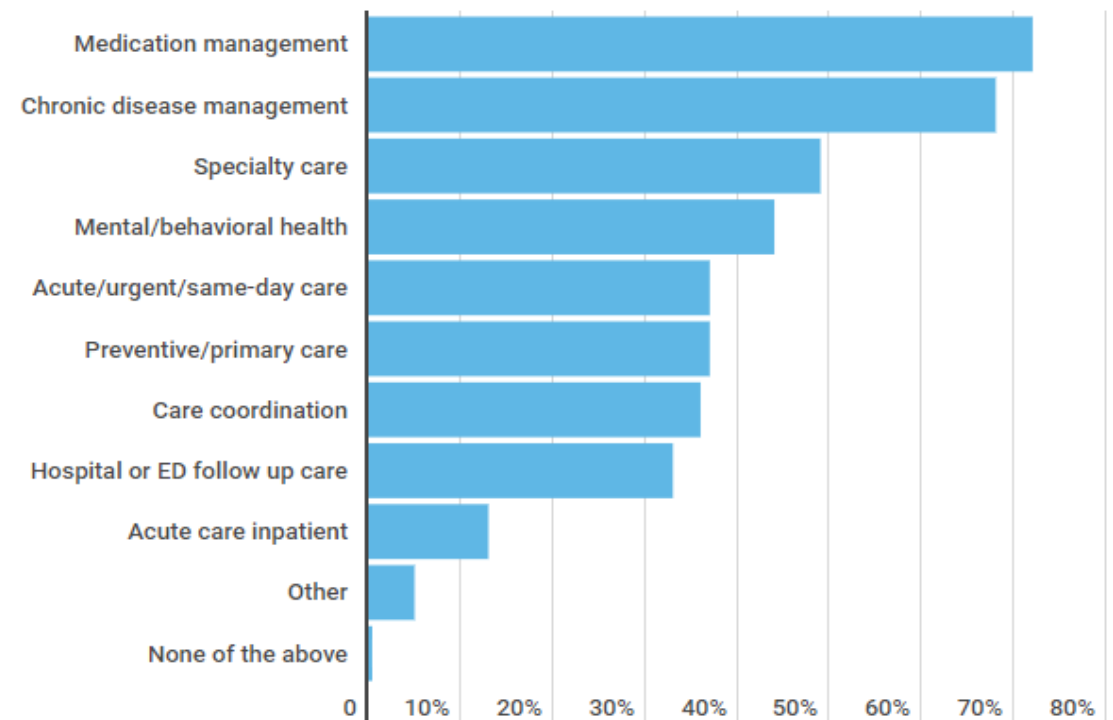
Services rendered through telehealth mainly include medication management, chronic disease management, specialty care, behavioral health, and acute or same day care.

Telehealth Care Processes



Source: American Medical Association, 2021 Telehealth Survey Report

Telehealth Services



Source: American Medical Association, 2021 Telehealth Survey Report

Remote Patient Monitoring

According to the AMA survey, 8% of physician respondents said they were using remote patient monitoring at this time.

Remote monitoring devices (RMD) provide valuable data to enhance the virtual evaluation of patients.

Most routine telemedicine visits will not require RMD to perform an adequate physical examination.

Devices include blood pressure cuff, thermometer, pulse oximeter, and scale.

Cellular / Bluetooth technology enabled.
Can interface with the virtual platform and electronically report data.

Many patients have wearables that can collect data.

Patients see telehealth as a means to solve their own access problems

3 out of 5 consumers in every age group would consider a virtual visit as an alternative to waiting just one day for an in-person appointment.

Ongoing Care

Includes management of stable chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes.

Prescription Refills

The ability for patients to manage refills digitally adds value to their experience even though this is not a billable service.

Faster Care

Improves access for low-complexity, acute illness visits.

Pre-surgical Visit

Beneficial to ensure patients are prepared for surgery.

Test Results

Review of normal lab results is typically not a billable service.

Post-surgical Visit

Also useful for post-hospitalization follow up.



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Physician support is key to successful telehealth adoption.

- Physicians are wary given past experience with EHR implementation and integrations that have proven stressful.
- Telehealth solutions need to fit into the physician workflow, integrate with the EHR, and ensure security and patient privacy.

Adaptive Challenges:

- Loss of autonomy, reluctance to change, and fear of losing the patient-physician relationship are more difficult to solve.
- Including physicians and front-line staff in decision-making protocols will help with integrating telehealth into daily workflows.



Strategies for providing telehealth services in primary care

Focus on identifying the care delivery problems that telehealth can help solve rather than approaching telehealth as a problem itself that needs to be solved.



Identify the patients who would benefit most from telehealth services

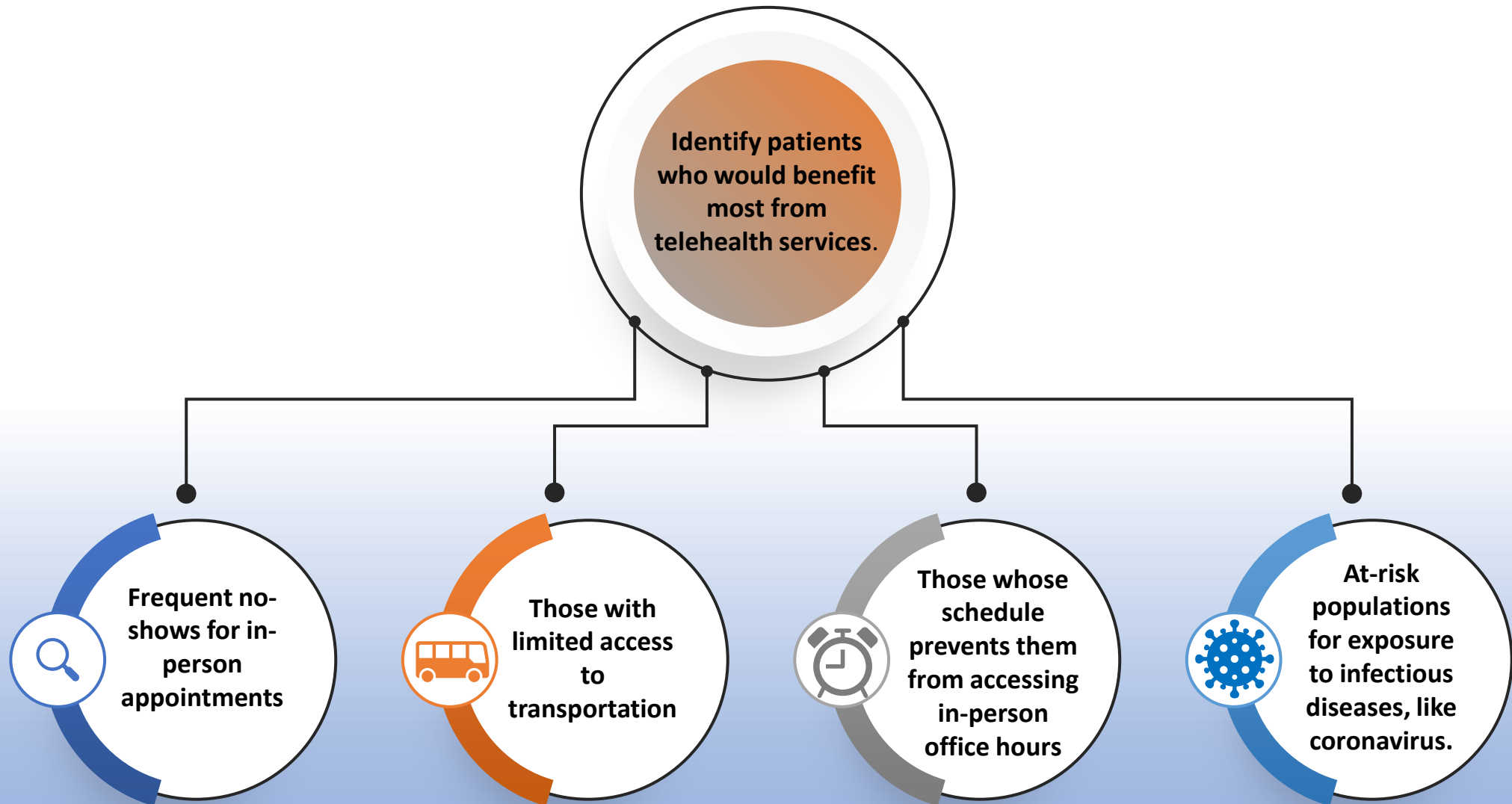


Raise awareness and steer utilization



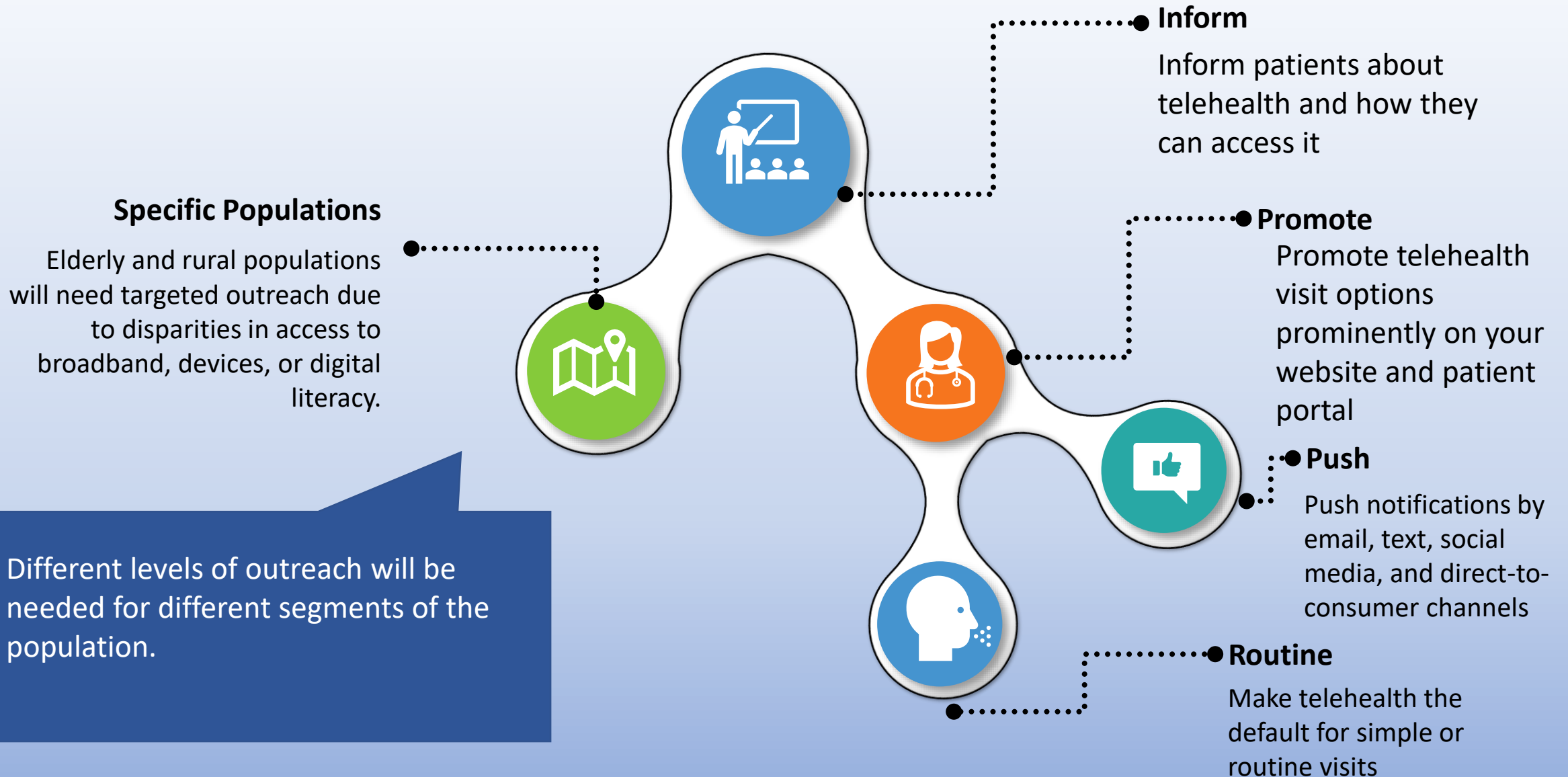
Provide visit and technology support

Preserve clinical capacity for the patients who absolutely need in-person care.



Raise awareness and steer utilization

Your Digital Front Door is everywhere your patients meet you



Provide visit and technology support



Pre-visit support



Complete pre-visit support at point of scheduling.

Completed by tech support or non-clinical staff.
Collect registration information



Tech support



Keep technology support available

Help patients set up required technology including appropriate apps required for visits



Virtual "Rooming"

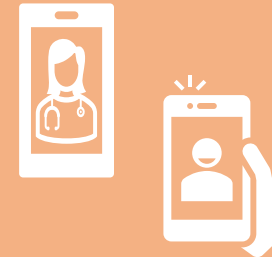


Prepare patient for visit.

Remind patient to find a quiet place to conduct the visit.
Explain how the telehealth visit will run.
Enter clinical information relevant to the visit.



Telehealth Visit



Document the patient encounter including the mode of telehealth used.

The mode of care delivery must meet the needs of the patient.



Post-visit



Follow up with the patient post-visit.

Complete next steps
Collect feedback about the telehealth visit

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Leverage the skills of the care team to provide a seamless telehealth experience for patients.

Technical skills: Navigate the technical aspects of the visit:

- Connectivity
- EHR integration
- E-prescribing
- Ordering ancillary services
- Patient Care Summary

Care Team: Manage patient expectations of the telehealth visit.

- Patient intake
- Set expectations for the visit
- Manage needs of the patient between visits virtually.

Provider: Leverage communication and observational skills to enhance the quality of the virtual physical examination.

- Establish trust
- Observe the patient in their surroundings
- Instruct patient or third party to assist in examination.
- Practice evidence-based medicine to determine necessity of ancillary testing

Building Trust into Telehealth

Patients may see a physician for the first time through telehealth, either through establishing care with a new PCP or a specialty physician consultation. Telehealth can layer in complexities that can skew a patient's perception.

Providers can develop specific skills to establish trust in the patient-physician relationship.

Establishing trust in the virtual setting focuses on four key elements.

Communicate competence

- Professional surroundings, good lighting
- Look directly at the camera while speaking to create the impression of eye contact.
- Be prepared to help troubleshoot technology glitches. Appearing flustered can undermine trust.

Demonstrate logic

- Share your screen with patients.
- Describe what you see and talk through the patient's record and data with them.

Convey empathy

- Use verbal cues like “mm-hmm” to indicate that you are listening.
- Mirror the patient's language
- Validate the patient's experience
- Verbalize empathy

Be reliable

- Telehealth enables convenient and ready accessibility.
- Stay on time for visits
- Anticipate patient barriers to the telehealth visit and help to overcome them.

The Virtual Physical Examination

It is possible to do a relatively thorough physical examination with audio and visual telemedicine.

Skills required by the physician include:

- Be observant
- Ability to instruct the patient or trusted third party to assist with a provider-directed physical examination.
- Practice evidence-based medicine using generally accepted protocols to guide decision-making.

Documentation of the patient encounter should include the mode of telehealth used and where the patient was located.

Medical record documentation should support the level of service provided.



Objectives

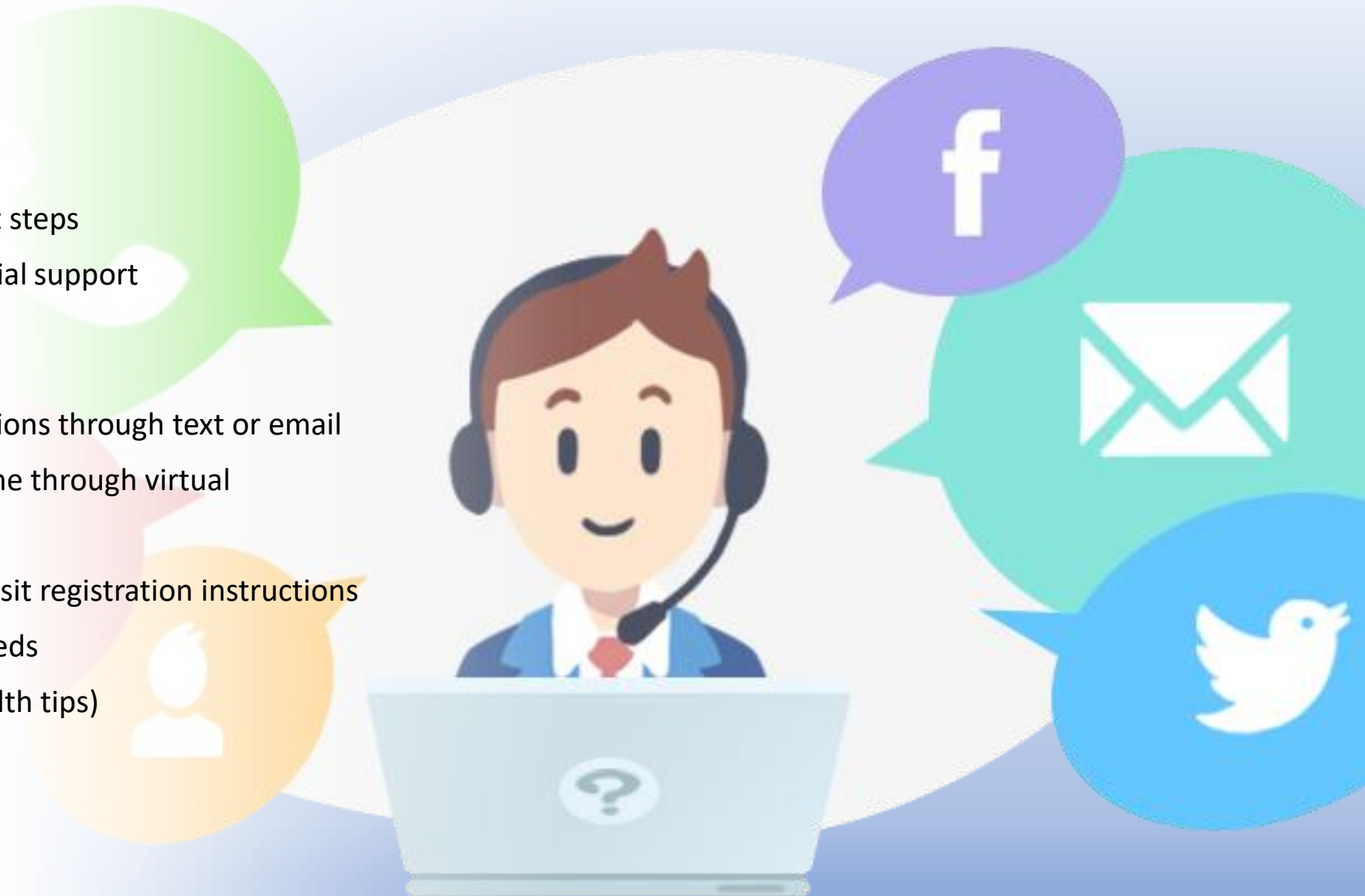
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Best practices: Patient Access to Care

Omni-channel access to care

- Reduce no-shows
- Ensure patient completes all pre-visit steps
- Initiate payment planning and financial support
- Insurance capture and verification
- Live or automated chat availability
- Appointment reminders and instructions through text or email
- Real-time wait times, accessible online through virtual assistants
- Digital forms and checklists for pre-visit registration instructions
- Education customized to patients needs
- Pre-operative coaching apps (PT, health tips)
- Virtual tours



Best Practices: Patient Access to Care

Reduce Unnecessary Emergency Room Visits

Kaiser Permanente

- 24/7 access to video health center connects to a physician that quickly provides an assessment and guidance.
 - Telehealth physicians can solve the problem 60% of the time.
 - Triage of life-threatening problems to the ER. Sends relevant medical information ahead to reduce risk of complications.
 - Those that are seen virtually and need follow up care are scheduled for an appointment with their PCP with communication of details of ahead of the visit.
 - addresses patient's needs immediately, 24/7
 - reduces unnecessary ER visits, leading to reduction of inappropriate hospital admissions.
-

Intermountain Healthcare

- Remote patient monitoring COVID program that combines telehealth and home monitoring to reduce ER visits and free up hospital beds.
- The physician would evaluate patients who tested positive or were suspected of having COVID and non-life-threatening symptoms. They were provided a blue-tooth pulse oximeter.
- The device was paired with their smartphone and used to measure blood oxygen levels daily for 2 weeks. The data was sent to a centrally located nurse care team.
- If the level was low, the center would contact the patient and conduct a clinical evaluation via phone or video.
- If the risk was deemed low, the patient would continue to be observed at home. If their condition was deteriorating, they would be instructed to go to the ER.

Best Practices: Virtual Rooming

Having medical assistants work with patients to connect to video visits could help narrow the digital divide, according to a new study conducted by Kaiser Permanente.

- The medical assistant calls the patient 15 minutes before the telehealth appointment to help connect them to the video visit.
- Of the 136,699 video visits studied, 83.6 percent involved a successful connection to the video visit. The use of virtual rooming in medical offices varied, ranging from 4.6 percent to 97.2 percent.
- Patients receiving care at medical offices with high virtual rooming rates were 7 percent more likely to have a successful connection to the video visit.
- After adjusting for patient factors such as age and comorbidities, the estimated connection rates for those who received assistance were:
 - 11.4 percent higher among patients who lived in low socioeconomic status neighborhoods
 - 12.1 percent higher among Black patients
 - 9.8 percent higher among Latino patients
 - 13.1 percent higher among those who needed language interpretation.



Best practices: Care Coordination and Gap Closure

Ensure patient is set up for success regarding post-visit next steps.

- Reduce complications and readmissions.
- Build a sense of patient loyalty.

Patient portal access for provider notes, labs and other medical record data.

Ongoing care team messaging via email, text, phone, or video



Continuous wellness education and care plan guidance from digital coach

Personalized care plans supported by wearables, connected devices, and digital therapeutics.

Real-time feedback and review

Tablets to prescribe digital health tools and RPM devices

Best Practices: Care Coordination and Gap Closure

Management of Chronic Disease

Kaiser Permanente

- Kaiser high blood pressure control rate exceeds 90%.
- The difference is attributed to the frequency of disease measurement and timeliness of treatment – facilitated by telehealth.
- Telehealth visits can be scheduled more frequently and consume less time for both patients and physicians.
- Blood pressure can be checked at home with a digital device.
- The combination of telehealth and home monitoring of blood pressure allows for more frequent medication adjustments, resulting in faster and better disease control, reducing complications like stroke, heart disease, and kidney failure.

Best Practices: Patient Access to Care

Reducing Health Care Disparities

Kaiser Permanente

- Beginning in 2006, KP began a program across 21 medical centers for pregnant women battling addiction.
- Patients lived in urban areas who were dependent on public transportation or lacked reliable childcare and struggled to attend group counseling programs.
- Fewer than 30% of participants attended meetings regularly.
- The program enabled women to connect with the meetings with a smartphone and 3G connection.

Perfect attendance rates increased above 80% resulting in reduced neonatal ICU admissions post-delivery

Intermountain Healthcare

- Smartphones that are capable of video interactions are a lifeline for underserved, rural populations that lack broadband internet.
- Visits included drug and alcohol related programs.
- Telehealth visits remained popular, even as restrictions eased.
- Intermountain patients that received their care through telehealth reported high satisfaction and were less likely to cancel appointments.

Intermountain delivered 85% of its mental and behavioral health visits virtually during the pandemic.

Best practices: Patient Satisfaction

A smooth and enjoyable experience, especially when it's the patient's first exposure to virtual care, is essential to sustain their openness to telehealth



Patients prefer telehealth visits with their own doctor with whom they have an established relationship.¹

Select telehealth visit types may help meet goals for patient engagement and retention.

Virtualizing some touchpoints in a patient journey may improve quality and satisfaction metrics.²

Patients are most comfortable with telehealth for:

- routine needs
- follow-up or quick questions
- reviewing test results
- medication management.

Providing telehealth for these specific use cases can improve patient satisfaction.³

Source:

1. Welch, B.M. et al. Patient preferences for direct-to-consumer telemedicine services: a nationwide survey. BMC Health Serv Res 17, 784.
2. League, John, Why providers must embrace telehealth now. Advisory Board: Our Take, October 27, 2020
3. Ebbert, Jon, et al. Patient preferences for telehealth services in a large multispecialty practice, Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare, January 18, 2021

Best Practices: Patient Satisfaction

Faster, more efficient specialty care

Typically, waiting to see a specialist is a dissatisfier for patients, delaying diagnosis and treatment.

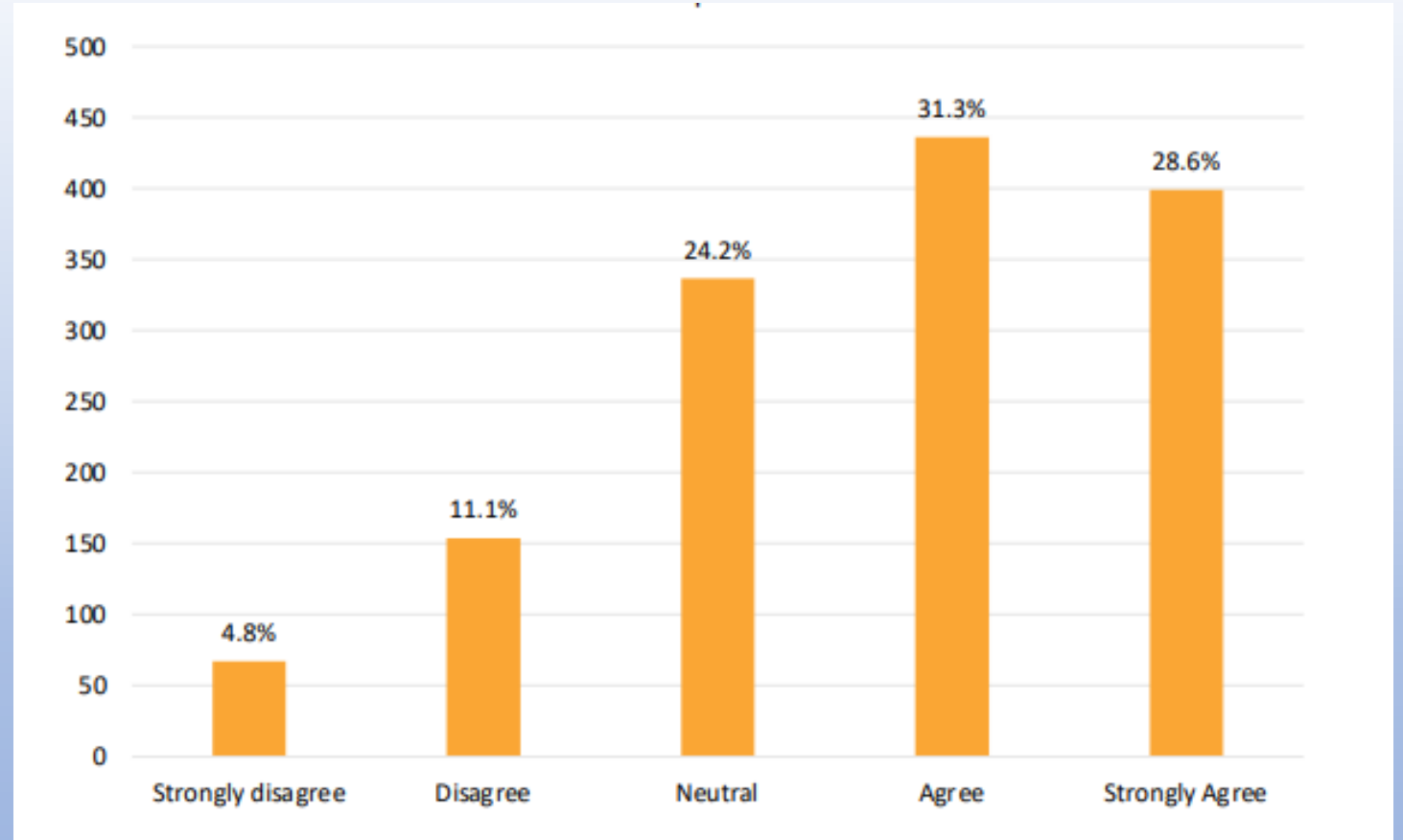
Kaiser Permanente developed a remote-specialist model that resolves patient's medical problems 40% of the time, with no specialist visit needed.

- The primary care physician will use telehealth to consult a specialist while the patient is with them in the exam room.
- Patients leave that appointment with a diagnosis and treatment plan.
- In the case of dermatology, 70% of patients who visit the PCP with a difficult-to-diagnose rash have the problem resolved in less than 10 minutes via telehealth.
- Patient satisfaction is 10% higher than for those that had an in-person consultation with the specialist.
- When the patient does need to see the specialist in-person for the procedure, it is scheduled after the virtual consultation, without needing an introductory in-person visit first.

Leveraging this model could reduce 30-40% of specialist visits, fewer missed days of work, and faster, more effective care.

Provider Satisfaction

Physicians agree that telehealth allows them to provide more comprehensive quality care



N=1,393

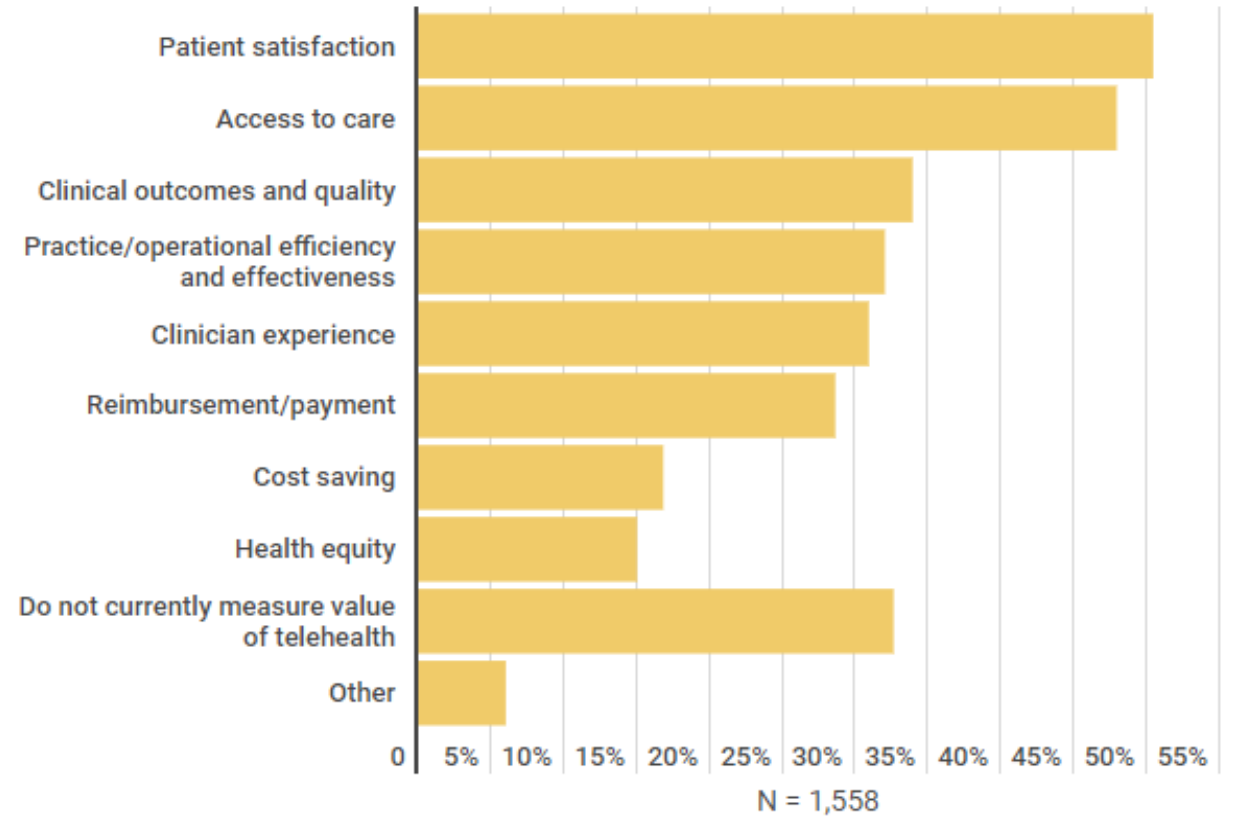
Provider Satisfaction

Telehealth value drivers for clinicians

- Broadened opportunity to work from home or remotely
- Deepened understanding of patient's home or social contexts
- Rightsized attention and time for patients based on complexity
- Sustained adherence to treatment
- Streamlined and faster documentation (asynchronous and ambient technologies)
- Increased throughput and/or productivity
- Improved access for patients

Source: League, John, Why providers must embrace telehealth now.
Advisory Board: Our Take, October 27, 2020

Metrics being used by providers to measure the value of telehealth

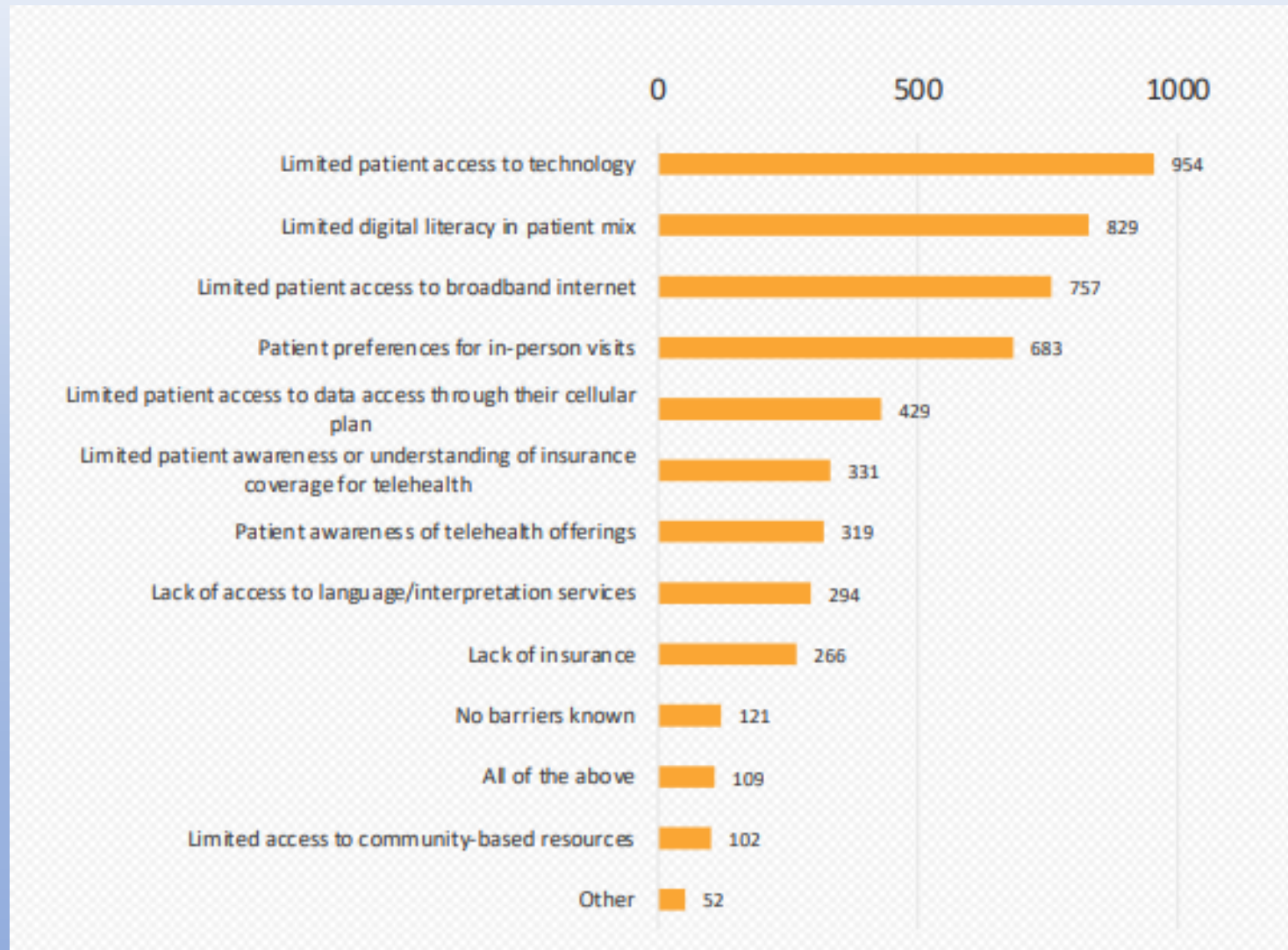


Source: American Medical Association, 2021 Telehealth Survey Report

Barriers to providers engaging in telehealth



Physicians identify the digital divide as the biggest barrier to telehealth for patients



Top 3 barriers

1. Limited patient access to technology
2. Limited digital literacy in patient mix
3. Limited access to broadband internet

Leveraging telehealth without providing patients with the technology or education to use it creates disparities and widens gaps in care

Where do we go from here?

Moving forward, we must be mindful of how we engage providers and care teams in the development of workflows and processes; integrating platforms to leverage the technology to work for providers and patients.

Take change management seriously.

Provider satisfaction is directly proportional to the degree of input they have in program design and rollout within their institutions. Pull, don't push.

Employ human-centered design.

Bring data together on a unifying platform creating a “single pane” view of the patient journey. The more technology and devices that layer into the delivery of care, the more important this piece will be.

Enhance care team connection and coordination.

Invest in a telehealth platform that is built for team-based care. This will remove the burden of the entire visit from the provider, leveraging the strengths and skills of the care team.

Telehealth, when used appropriately, can elevate the care experience for the patient, the provider, and the entire care team.

Thank you