

Telehealth on the Rise



Most physicians (57 percent) in the United States are open to having video consultations with their patients, according to a nationwide survey conducted by telehealth vendor American Well. Only 12 percent of respondents are unwilling to see a patient over video and 31 percent remain uncertain.

More than 2,000 primary care doctors took part in the online survey conducted in May 2015, which aimed to determine physicians' perceptions on video doctor visits. Work-life balance was the most popular reason physicians cited for seeing patients over video, followed by increased earning opportunity, and improved patient outcomes.

In addition, 69 percent of doctors indicated that video is superior to phone or email communication for making accurate diagnoses for new patient consults. Just five percent of those surveyed said email was best for diagnosis and only one percent said text was best.

Meanwhile, new research from market intelligence firm Tractica predicts telehealth video consultation sessions — also referred to as eConsults, eVisits, or even the broader term telemedicine — will increase from 19.7 million in 2014 to 158.4 million by 2020. While clinical consultations currently account for more than 75 percent of the market, Tractica forecasts that non-clinical video consultations will outnumber clinical consultations by 2019.

"There's a sea change going on within the physician community," said Roy Schoenberg, MD, CEO of American Well. "Doctors see value in virtual visits for their patients and also in managing their own work-life balance."

Besides urgent care, the survey found that physicians envision many clinical applications for video visits: 86 percent view video consults as appropriate for medication management/prescription renewals; 80 percent believe they are appropriate for chronic condition management; and 70 percent see value for behavioural health.

Interestingly, 60 percent of doctors surveyed said that if a nearby hospital offered them the opportunity to consult with specialists via video, it would increase their likelihood of referring patients to that hospital. For peer clinical consults, primary care physicians in the survey cited that dermatology, psychiatry, infectious disease, pain management, and neurology were the top specialty consults that they desired.

Sources: [American Well](#); [Tractica](#)
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