



Telehealth utilisation growing across range of settings



Recent developments in the United States have led to growing utilisation of telehealth in an array of clinical settings. Congress has taken some positive steps, with some regulation hurdles for reimbursement and crossing state lines getting cleared. Meanwhile, Hurricanes Harvey and Irma highlighted the importance of using telehealth during natural disasters.

Here are some of the reasons why interest in telehealth is taking off:

1. Veteran's breaking state barriers

The House passed a bill to let VA providers cross state lines for telemedicine and that bipartisan legislation — which received broad support from Congress and trade groups — will let VA providers — in good standing — practice telehealth regardless of the patient's location.

2. CMS final rule expands reimbursement options

The MACRA final rule boosts telemedicine for patients in rural or underserved areas by paying for more consults and making it easier for providers to bill for them. The rule adds a series of new billing codes that reimburse virtual visits for risk assessments and care planning under CMS' chronic care management programme.

3. Natural disaster relief work

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma brought a spotlight on the value of telehealth during a natural disaster. Nemours and LiveHealth Online were two of the telehealth systems who stepped in to help patients after Irma. Meanwhile, nearly 3,000 people over three days availed themselves of a telehealth programme offered for free by another area provider, Florida Hospital.

4. Employer programmes

Employee telehealth tools save Cuyahoga County thousands while employer-based telemedicine programmes overall are growing. An August 2017 survey from the National Business Group on Health, in fact, found that telehealth offerings by employers are becoming nearly universal.

5. Critical care for premature infants

Telemedicine allows Mayo Clinic to provide remote consultations to preterm infants, newborns with respiratory distress and babies who require advanced resuscitation located in community hospitals get the speciality care they need through video to avoid transfers.

6. Emergency departments adopting tech

The Texas House passed Bill 479 to improve patient outcomes by using telemedicine technology to bring the judgment of trauma surgeons into the back of ambulances to assess and direct treatment at Texas Tech.

7. Remote patient monitoring

American Well and Medtronic have partnered to utilise video-enabled platforms that allow bi-directional data flow between the two parties, giving patients greater access to their care team while improving clinician access to critical information and opportunities for early intervention. Video classes and remote care has helped the CDC's National Diabetes Prevention Programme as well.

8. Behavioural health services

Community Health System is using intake and placement services at nine hospitals in East Tennessee with licensed behavioural health clinicians through a home-grown telepsychiatry programme designed to shorten wait times and move patients through the care centre. The technology has allowed continuity of care and an increased range of behavioural health services for patients by removing barriers such as distance, cost and availability, CHS said.

Source: [Healthcare IT News](#)

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