



Topic Brief: Optimal Quality Metrics for Telemedicine

Date: 6/28/2021

Nomination Number: 0952

Purpose: This document summarizes the information addressing a nomination submitted on May 26, 2021 through the Effective Health Care Website. This information was used to inform the Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) Program decisions about whether to produce an evidence report on the topic, and if so, what type of evidence report would be most suitable.

Issue: The nominator for this topic seeks to understand which quality metrics are optimal for the measurement of health outcomes and health-related quality of life in accordance to costs for both payors and health systems in telemedicine environments.

Program Decision: The EPC Program will not develop a new systematic review for this topic because an upcoming systematic review will address many of the nominator's questions.

The Effective Health Care Program has posted draft key questions for an upcoming systematic review¹ ([Telehealth During COVID-19 | Effective Health Care Program \(ahrq.gov\)](#)) that will be geared towards understanding the effectiveness, harms and implementation of telehealth services; and patient, provider, and organizational perspective on success in telehealth. In addition, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has developed a beta version of the CAHPS survey on Clinician and Group Visits, which will include care delivered through telehealth. Through use of the survey, evidence will be generated about patient's experience with telehealth that can further inform the nominator's concerns.

Background

- Telehealth is the use of information and telecommunications technology to provide or support healthcare across time and/or distance.²
- Telehealth visits have increased since the COVID epidemic began. There was a 154% increase in telehealth visits early in the pandemic (March 2020) compared to the previous year.³
- Since the COVID pandemic coverage for telehealth services has expanded and evolved.⁴
- AHRQ's Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) program develop surveys to advance our scientific understanding of patient experience with health care. They have recently developed a beta version of the Clinician & Group Visit Survey 4.0 to include questions about telehealth ([CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(ahrq.gov\)](#)).

- AHRQ’s Medical Expenditure Panel Survey is a nationally representative household survey of healthcare access, utilization, patient experience, and spending for the non-institutionalized US population. AHRQ plans to integrate questions related to telehealth and telemedicine into the survey. Initial data will be available in 2022, with national data available in 2023.

Nomination Summary

- The nominator delivers care through telehealth and expressed concerns about the quality of care delivered through this modality, compounding issues with fragmented care.
- They indicated interest in many aspects of telehealth. In particular they are interested in the characteristics of the patient, provider and organization that are associated improved outcomes when using telehealth as a modality for delivering healthcare; and what would be considered successful telehealth encounter for the organization, provider and patient.

References

1. Telehealth During COVID-19: Draft Key Questions. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Effective Health Care Program, June 17, 2021. Accessed June 28, 2021. <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/products/virtual-health-covid/key-questions>.
2. Totten AM, Hansen RN, Wagner J, Stillman L, Ivlev I, Davis-O’Reilly C, Towle C, Erickson JM, Erten-Lyons D, Fu R, Fann J, Babigumira JB, Palm-Cruz KJ, Avery M, McDonagh MS. Telehealth for Acute and Chronic Care Consultations. Comparative Effectiveness Review No. 216. (Prepared by Pacific Northwest Evidence-based Practice Center under Contract No. 290-2015-00009-I.) AHRQ Publication No. 19-EHC012-EF. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; April 2019.
3. Trends in the Use of Telehealth During the Emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, January-March 2020. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6943a3.htm>
4. Billing for telehealth during COVID-19. United States Department of Health and Human Services. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/billing-and-reimbursement/>

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Conflict of Interest: None of the investigators have any affiliations or financial involvement that conflicts with the material presented in this report.

Acknowledgements

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