

Article

Telehealth is the Post-Pandemic Silver Lining



The world changed in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic became a global health emergency that impacted almost every person in every nation. Non-essential stores were closed. Public transport was restricted. Our only route back to normality was the creation of vaccines in record time. But what did we learn from this experience?

Perhaps the most important lesson was that communications technology can allow us to engage with other people remotely and this works far better than we have predicted before the pandemic.

This communication revolution also extended to healthcare. Most healthcare professionals were legally prevented from offering any form of remote service, including advice, before the pandemic. The HIPAA Privacy Rule¹ sets limits on how personal health information can be used, so providers have long been wary of remote healthcare. Unlike other countries, remote healthcare was extremely limited inside the U.S. until the pandemic lockdowns changed everything.

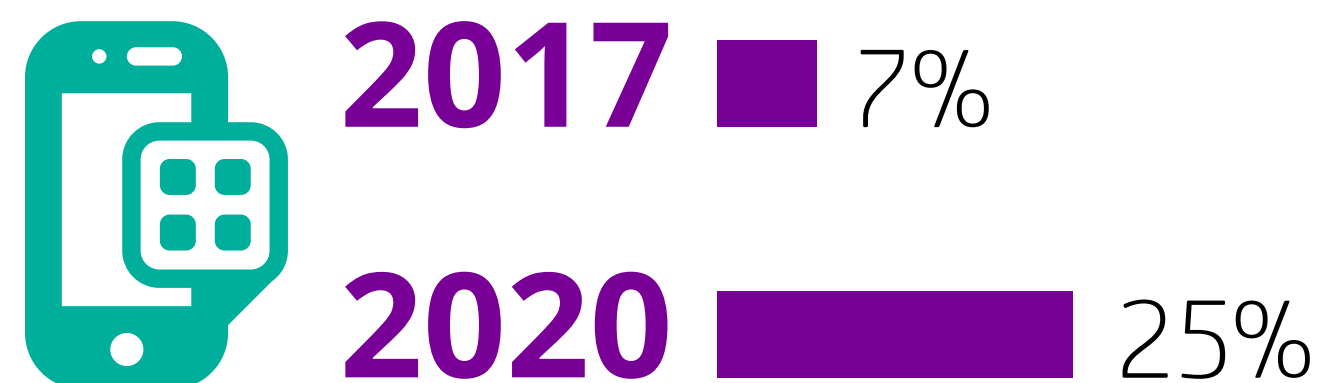
The percentage of American physicians using Telehealth to connect with their patients saw a surge from 22% in 2019 to 80% in 2020.²

This refers to patients now being able to connect remotely to their preferred physician, not just a pool of unknown doctors. This growth in use has led to a dramatic increase in the value of the global Telehealth market, which is projected to reach a value of \$560 billion by 2027. To put that in context, the market was worth \$61 billion in 2019.³ The Department for Health and Human Services (HHS) even has a Telehealth guide for patients and providers on their website now.⁴



Recent data from the Teleperformance CX Lab Global Survey⁵, which questioned just over 4,000 American consumers, indicates that mobile app adoption in the health insurance sector has dramatically increased in 2020.

Health insurance app use grew from just 7% in 2017 to 25% in 2020, with an 11 percentage point jump in just the past year alone.



2/5 of Health Insurance Consumers to Use Mobile Apps by 2023

As more providers embrace omnichannel service delivery, it is likely that many more services will be directly available from healthcare apps. Therefore, we predict that usage will increase to 40% of health insurance consumers in the U.S. by 2023.

This is based on the strong growth our CX Lab has documented and the scale of the opportunity. There are precedents in other business sectors, such as digital banking and e-commerce, where apps are already used by the majority (or very close to a majority) of American consumers.

In addition, the CX Lab data clearly shows that giving consumers what they want, in terms of channels, increases loyalty and advocacy.

People want to have access to healthcare anytime, anywhere, across multiple devices, and in the language of their choice.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published their own analysis of recent trends throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and concluded that virtual health has multiple benefits for the general public, patients, and medical professionals.⁶ The report states:

“The increased availability of Telehealth services also might have reduced disease exposure for staff members and patients, preserved scarce supplies of personal protective equipment, and minimized patient surge on facilities. In addition, most patients seeking Telehealth in the early pandemic period were managed at home, which might have reduced large volumes of patients seeking care at health care facilities.”

Telehealth is being adopted rapidly for mental health treatment and counseling. This is urgently needed as 65% of Americans aged 18-34 have had concerns about their own mental health, or that of a family member, since the start of the pandemic.⁷ For example, the pharmacy chain CVS has started offering in-store mental health counseling for \$59 per session, which can also be booked as Telehealth appointments.⁸

Last year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) temporarily approved over **80 new medical services** so they could be delivered using Telehealth. There is a dramatic opportunity available for both healthcare providers and patients if this change becomes permanent.

Telehealth Transformation

There are three broad areas of healthcare that could be immediately improved based on the experience in the pandemic:



1. On-demand emergency care

The ability to immediately consult with a medical professional about an immediate concern, therefore, avoiding the need to visit an emergency department.



2. Virtual consultation

This could be any check-up that does not require a physical examination, such as a skin condition, cold, or psychotherapy session.



3. Remote monitoring

Digital health tools that can monitor and assist physicians with a diagnosis or alert them to a problem.

The real opportunity is to blend all these options, along with pharmacy services, to create a complete healthcare omnichannel for the patient. This opportunity cannot be overstated, as it means that the focus can be on preventing illness rather than just treating it. When patients require treatment it should be available more easily and by blending remote monitoring into the broader provision of healthcare, outcomes can be improved, often at a lower cost. This is not a prediction, as the devices are already out there. It just requires the healthcare providers to actively embrace the opportunity. Both Fitbit (now owned by Google) and Apple have claimed that their smart healthcare devices can detect illness before the patient notices any symptoms, including COVID-19.⁹

The ability of these devices to detect an erratic cardiac rhythm could be critical in preventing heart attacks.¹⁰ Heart attack death rates in the U.S. have doubled in 2020 as fewer Americans wanted to visit a hospital to investigate chest pains during the pandemic. With over 37 million Americans suffering from stage 2 hypertension, an omnichannel approach to healthcare could improve the health prospects of millions of people.

Teleperformance Supports Companies in their Digital Transformation



In a recent article, Linda Comp-Noto¹¹, President of the Healthcare Division at Teleperformance, said: “Long after the pandemic has ended, Telehealth will continue to rise as the foundation of a robust healthcare strategy, fit for the new normal. Providers who previously deemed the omni-channel experience too risky will deploy a hybrid approach to healthcare offering a combination of on-site and virtual care to cater to the needs of different demographics.”¹²

All these models of virtual care require a high-tech/high-touch approach to patient interactions.¹³ As Linda’s article suggests, there is a long road ahead for the development of Telehealth. Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotic Process Automation (RPA), and other technologies will be required, but also people with both knowledge of healthcare services and empathy for the patients they are helping. As Telehealth develops, the industry will learn from and adopt methods used by other industries, such as retail and technology.

We already have over 27,000 interaction experts working in our healthcare team.

This is where Teleperformance can help.

We also have experience designing customer solutions for other industries, such as retail and consumer technology brands.

Our Digital Integrated Business Services team has designed digital transformation programs for clients in multiple industries all over the world. Our experience can help build an improved patient experience today and also to integrate innovation into an omnichannel solution, so it evolves into the healthcare environment of the future.

Telehealth is facing a dramatic wave of post-pandemic digital transformation. Health providers need to embrace a new world of apps and smart devices to support a more holistic focus on preventing and monitoring illness – not just treating it after it starts. Teleperformance has extensive experience building these consumer engagement processes and platforms for the healthcare industry and also in the industries that healthcare can learn from, e-commerce and technology.

References:

1. The HIPAA Privacy Rule December 2020
2. Physician telehealth usage increased 58% since 2019, survey finds, Becker's Hospital Review, October 2020
3. Telehealth Market Worth USD 559.52 Billion at 25.2% CAGR; Fear of Virus Transmission through Hospital Travels to Spur Growth, Fortune Business Insights™
4. Telehealth.Hhs.Gov Telehealth Hhs Government Website, May 2021
5. Teleperformance CX Lab 2021
6. CDC, Trends in the Use of Telehealth During the Emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, January–March 2020, October 2020
7. The impact of COVID-19 on mental well-being in the U.S., Health Pulse Survey Results 2021, Aetna
8. Will CVS make a breakthrough as it expands in-store mental health services?, RetailWire, May 2021
9. A Covid-19 detector on your wrist? That's what Fitbit is claiming for its new Fitbit Sense smartwatch –it even reads your sweat, South China Morning Post, August 2020
10. Fitness trackers: an unexpected aid in the fight against pandemics, World Economic Forum, May 2021
11. Linda Comp-Noto, Division President, Teleperformance
12. Teleperformance Blog 2021
13. Teleperformance Blog 2021



For more insights and white papers:

<https://teleperformance.com/en-us/insights/white-papers>

Follow us:



[/teleperformanceglobal](#)



[/teleperformance](#)



[teleperformanceblog.com](#)



[/company/teleperformance](#)



[@teleperformance_group](#)



[@teleperformance](#)