
A Quarter Of Healthcare Providers Make Strides In Telemedicine/Telehealth



About a quarter of healthcare providers said their virtual care programmes – telemedicine and telehealth – are financially sustainable and are improving efficiency, patient volumes and loyalty by filling gaps in medical specialties or helping chronically-ill patients, according to a poll conducted by KPMG LLP, the U.S. audit, tax and advisory firm

Telehealth, which uses technology to connect clinicians with patients, is gaining credence in urgent care settings from mobile devices, "primary care plus" from retail clinics or for psychiatric assessments in an emergency department. Telemedicine – clinician-to-clinician consults – has a long history in radiology and for remote, underserved patient populations where specialists are needed for their clinical expertise, but it is gaining greater use. For example, telemedicine is used for neurology consults for stroke patients and also for referring nursing home patients to hospitals if they need more acute care.

Dr. Richard Bakalar, managing director at KPMG LLP, discusses the improving technological, economic and regulatory climate for using virtual care -- telehealth (clinician-to-patient) and telemedicine (clinician-to-clinician).

"Healthcare providers need to think of virtual care as a means to improve patient access and provider efficiency, especially as value-based contracts and other reimbursement incentives gain a greater share of revenue, while meeting patient care needs by filling gaps for key medical specialties," said Dr. Richard Bakalar, managing director at KPMG and a member of the firm's Global Healthcare Center of Excellence. "Telehealth is rapidly evolving beyond urgent care and is increasingly used for follow up visits and helping chronically ill patients connect with their doctor online. Health plans and government payers are seeing the value from the technology and enhancing reimbursement for virtual care."

Yet, approximately 35 percent of respondents said they have not yet started a programme incorporating virtual care, and the remaining 40 percent are in early stages.

Key Drivers, Challenges for Virtual Care

KPMG's poll found that the biggest drivers for expediting adoption of virtual care were:

- Increase patient volumes and loyalty (29 percent);
- Care coordination of high risk patients (17 percent);
- Reduce costs for access to medical specialists (17 percent);
- Meaningful use and payer incentives for adoption (13 percent);
- Patient requests/consumer demand (13 percent).

Implementing a virtual care programme is not without challenges, however. Healthcare providers cited several, including:

- Too many other technological priorities (19 percent);
- Maintaining a sustainable business model (18 percent);
- Organisational readiness to implement new services/technology (18 percent);
- Regulatory compliance and risk concerns (15 percent).

The poll reflected responses from 120 individuals, who identified themselves as working for healthcare providers.

Source: [PR Newswire](#)

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