



COVID-19 and Continuity of

Care with Telehealth

Table of Contents

What You'll Learn

2

5 Telehealth Drivers During
COVID-19

3

How to Support Telehealth
in Your Facility

4

Taking Virtual Care Beyond
Coronavirus

5

What You'll Learn

Telemedicine has been revolutionizing the way care gets delivered. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been essential to keeping residents healthy when they are most at risk. Find out how your program can encourage adoption now and going forward to improve the lives of those in your facility.

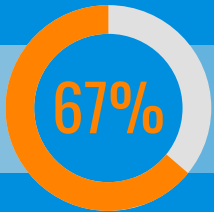


5 Telehealth Drivers During COVID-19

Telehealth has become increasingly popular, with almost a quarter of US consumers having had a virtual visit according to a 2018 survey by Deloitte. And it has been of particular interest to seniors, who often encounter barriers to seeing a doctor like mobility or transportation issues. What no one could have predicted was that the coronavirus pandemic would make it an even more relevant and, in fact, necessary way to ensure continuity of care and optimal outcomes.



4 in 10 seniors own smartphones



of adults ages 65 and older go online.
– Pew Research Center

Medicare Part B covers certain Telehealth services and STATES CAN CHOOSE to cover telemedicine under Medicaid.

During COVID-19, telemedicine has been an important tool for keeping residents healthy for a number of reasons:

- 1. Safety:** Rather than risk transports to crowded hospitals or physician offices, where large populations of COVID-19-positive patients may be seen and treated, the vulnerable senior population can access critical consultations for effective treatment right from their facility.
- 2. Quicker Access:** With live support available any time, residents can get coverage even during times when traditional offices visits are not typically available, such as at night and on weekends, so they can get the help they need, when they need it.
- 3. Preventive Medicine:** Since many physician offices have reduced visits for non-essential medical visits, telehealth is a way for residents to seek timely care to help prevent minor issues from becoming a more serious condition.
- 4. Comprehensive Treatment:** CMS' relaxed regulatory requirements mean physicians can get covered for virtual visits with new or existing patients for an expanded list of services, including some speech therapy, psychological testing evaluation, PT and OT.
- 5. Mental Health Support:** To help address any mental health issues arising from loneliness and isolation during COVID-19, CMS is allowing psychologists to offer telehealth services for residents in communities.

How to Support Telehealth in Your Facility

Since telehealth depends on technology, it requires a facility to offer a strong internet connection throughout that will allow for seamless, reliable connectivity. And, residents need to have a desktop, laptop, tablet or phone they can use to access the internet as well as video accessibility. With this foundation in place, there are other steps communities can take to promote telehealth.

Educate:

For those not using telemedicine, offer education about what it is, how it is used, common conditions that can be diagnosed and treated digitally and the benefits. Ease resident concerns by explaining that they can rely on telehealth during COVID-19 then return to in-office care once the pandemic subsides if that makes them more comfortable.

Offer Training and Support:

Some residents may have difficulties setting up and using telemedicine tools so consider offering a tutorial on the technology employed to help them schedule and attend their visits and access any follow up.

Provide Privacy:

Be sure to allow for spaces that prevent intrusions to protect residents' personal health information during a digital diagnosis or treatment session.

Consider a Third-Party Solution:

Some communities utilize an outside vendor to provide telemedicine service and technology, training and IT support that can minimize the impact on your staff in helping residents seek treatment.



Taking Virtual Care Beyond Coronavirus

While remote visits may be in high demand now, the benefits to digital health for aging populations offers many advantages even once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, including:

- **Convenient Visits:** With a digital visit, residents do not have to worry about weather, traveling or sitting in a waiting room for hours, making it easier for them to be seen than an in-person appointment and increasing the likelihood that they will seek care.
- **Lower Strain on Caregivers:** Since family members do not have to worry about taking their loved one to as many doctor visits, telehealth can reduce the amount of time they need to take off and the stress of juggling the added responsibility.
- **Reduced ER Use:** While a broken hip and other serious conditions necessitate a trip to the ER, for routine concerns, telehealth visits can deliver quality, appropriate care on site that allow seniors to stay put, reducing care transfers and keeping them out of the hospital.
- **Senior Satisfaction:** Quality of life is paramount for residents and that is where telehealth can deliver big. In one study in the Journal of the Society of General Internal Medicine, 94–99 percent of users reported being very satisfied with telehealth.
- **Self-Care:** Beyond just treating routine issues, what is making telemedicine even more valuable to communities is that it can support seniors in managing chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes and depression to improve their quality of life.





PharMerica is redefining pharmacy management service for skilled nursing facilities, long term care facilities, hospitals and other institutional care settings. With a singular focus on tailored customer service, we collaborate with our clients to develop products and services that help them provide quality care, control costs, and remain compliant with ever-changing regulations.

Contact us at PharMerica@pharmerica.com
or 855-637-1755 to learn more.