



Transforming Care Delivery with Telehealth at Kaiser Permanente

Today's communications technology enables Kaiser Permanente members to receive a wide variety of clinical care and services from their physicians and care team, free from geographic constraints. At Kaiser Permanente, telehealth is a key component of our integrated approach to high-quality care delivery (as shown in the graphic below). Adoption of telehealth across the country has seen progress in recent years, but there are significant policy and payment barriers to widespread use. That's why Kaiser Permanente advocates for policies facilitating broader access to care through these modalities.

Meeting Consumer Demand for Telehealth

Consumers seek a combination of in-person and virtual health services. Research conducted by Accenture Technologies found that 78 percent of those surveyed were interested in receiving "virtual" health care some or most of the time. The most often cited reason for seeking virtual care was greater

convenience than traditional in-person health care services (37 percent).¹

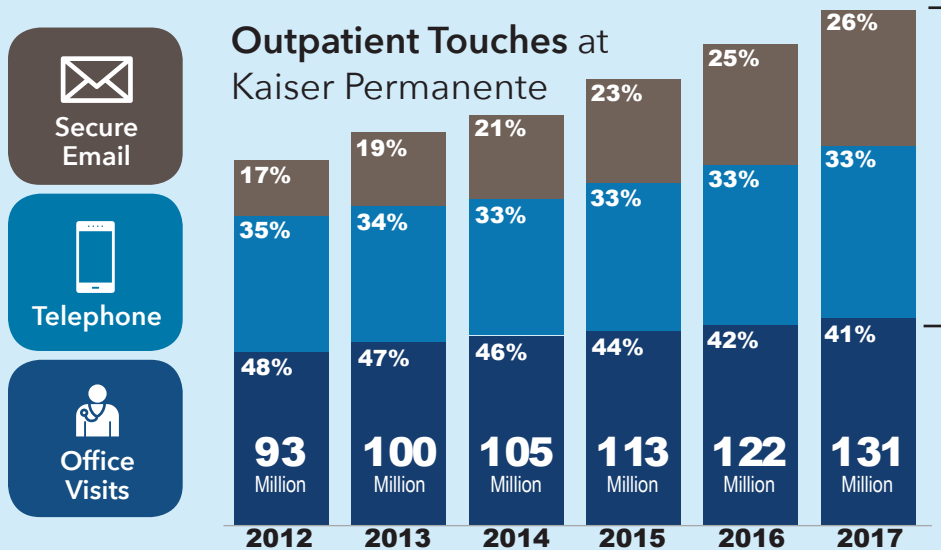
When they think of telehealth, many people imagine a video conference between a doctor and a patient. At Kaiser Permanente, telehealth services offer many more options.

Telehealth at Kaiser Permanente:

- has been available to our members in various forms since the late 1990s as a seamless part of how our clinical professionals deliver care – as opposed to being an outsourced add-on service;
- is integrated into our electronic medical record (EMR), KP HealthConnect, enabling highly coordinated care across clinical professionals; and
- includes a wide range of options for how and where members access care, including phone, email, doctor-to-doctor consults, and two-way video.

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DELIVERING THE RIGHT CARE IN THE RIGHT SETTING



In 2017,
59%
EMR-enabled,
telehealth touches
More telehealth
touches than in-person

Source: Core Value Metrics Report, Kaiser Permanente, 2018



5.3 million appointments requested
24.5 million prescriptions filled online
48.7 million lab tests viewed
73.7% of eligible members registered

Source: Kaiser Permanente Digital Metrics, 2017 Annual Report



133,935
completed
video visits
in 2017

Source: Kaiser Permanente internal data

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Telehealth Adoption Across Kaiser Permanente

Telehealth connectivity has made getting health issues resolved more convenient than ever for consumers – empowering them to choose where, when, and how they receive care. When patients choose to have a phone, video, or email interaction with any Kaiser Permanente care provider, they can expect the same high-quality care they get in-person at any Kaiser Permanente facility. The result is often an acceleration of care, breaking down the barriers between patients and the care they need. Since 2012, the number of telehealth “touches” between Kaiser Permanente members and clinical professionals has exceeded members’ in-person visits.

Using Telehealth to Drive Quality

Kaiser Permanente’s telestroke program (currently available in Kaiser Permanente’s Colorado, Northern and Southern California, Northwest, and Washington regions) is an example of how it’s applying telehealth to improve quality of care. The program allows emergency physicians to engage a neurologist at a hospital without an in-house neurological intensive care unit, often before the patient arrives at the emergency room.

When stroke patients arrive in the emergency department, they need to see both a neurologist and a radiologist before blood clot-dissolving treatment can be administered. Special beds equipped with mobile video devices enable neurologists to visually evaluate a patient, while virtually accompanying him or her to the radiology department. The doctors can then, together, review the imaging results and quickly decide whether to administer the treatment.

Kaiser Permanente’s telestroke program is allowing providers to start treatment in emergency rooms twice as quickly as typical stroke treatment.²

Barriers to Broad Telehealth Adoption

Kaiser Permanente advocates for policy and payment changes at the federal and state levels to enable telehealth applications to be leveraged more broadly.

Roadblocks preventing robust use of telehealth still exist, including the following:

- **Limited Medicare coverage of telehealth:** The most significant policy barrier to broad adoption and use of telehealth has been the very limited coverage of telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries. Federal Medicare law permits telehealth only for beneficiaries in rural or underserved parts of the country, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has therefore considered telehealth as an extra or “supplemental” benefit for people enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans in non-rural areas, which carries additional costs for plans and for enrollees. A federal budget deal³ passed by Congress and signed by the President on February 9, 2018, included the Creating High-Quality Results and Outcomes Necessary to Improve Chronic (CHRONIC) Care Act of 2017, which will allow Medicare Advantage plans to cover telehealth as a basic Medicare benefit rather than a supplemental benefit. While this is an important step forward, Kaiser Permanente will continue to advocate through the regulatory implementation process to ensure appropriate access to telehealth services for Medicare Advantage members.
- **Different rules governing telehealth among states:** No two states are alike in their treatment of telehealth – including differences in the definition of telehealth, requirements for coverage and payment parity with in-person services, the need to obtain consent, and other provisions – making it challenging to scale solutions and workflows across jurisdictions. Kaiser Permanente participates in the legislative and regulatory processes in its jurisdictions to ensure favorable changes that enable broader telehealth availability and, to the extent possible, adopt consistent rules.
- **Physician licensure requirements by state:** State medical boards rightly ensure consumer protection through medical licensure processes. Kaiser Permanente supports interstate medical licensure compact legislation that would facilitate licensure in multiple states, allowing physicians to provide care to patients in other states via telehealth.

Changes to address these challenges would lead to broader access to telehealth for all patients, including Medicare beneficiaries in Kaiser Permanente and beyond. As a critical component to its integrated care delivery model, Kaiser Permanente will continue to champion legislation that facilitates access to these care modalities.

1 Accenture 2017 Consumer Survey on virtual health

2 Kaiser Permanente internal data

3 Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018