

# DIGITAL HEALTH

*Myths busted, surge in adoption rates, and improved health outcomes.*

Digital healthcare encompasses a broad scope of tools in several different categories and right now everyone wants to be at the digital front door, here are just a few of the tools that are in the digital toolbox.

- Telehealth/Telemedicine
- Wearable Devices
- Health Information Technology
- Mobile Health (Medical Apps)
- Other

These tools have the vast capability to improve healthcare outcomes, positively influence lifestyle change, enhance the delivery of care, and create untapped efficiencies.

## MYTHS

It is too good to be true. When something new comes out or is considered maybe to be a buzz theme it's not uncommon to have myths associated with it. However, I want to share with you the Myth Busting study.

The University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) did a study on common concerns around telemedicine and wanted to understand if it could stand up to the high standard of an in-person face-to-face visit.

URMC investigates the following three concerns regarding telemedicine:

- That it will reduce access to care for the most vulnerable patients who may be unable to access digital services.
- That reimbursing providers for telemedicine services at the same rate as traditional services will encourage telemedicine overuse.
- That telemedicine is not an effective way to provide care.

The data disproved all three concerns. "Not only did our most vulnerable patients not get left behind - they were among those engaging the most with, and benefitting the most from, telemedicine services."<sup>i</sup>

A study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine reviewed 38 clinical trials from 2013 to 2021 that measured the ability of telehealth to replace or enhance regular patient care.

Researchers found that in most instances telemedicine had the same or even better quality than in-person visits.<sup>ii</sup>

These scenarios are exciting and encouraging and I believe we will continue to see the expansion of this benefit beyond the Covid-19 pandemic phase. Healthcare consumerism will continue to advance telehealth driving providers, payers, and policymakers to continue expanding services.

## ADOPTION RATES

Each of these tools had some presence pre-Covid, but we saw a surge in usage and adoption when the Covid pandemic reached its peak.

According to a health study the AMA did in 2022 they found:<sup>iii</sup>

- Digital tool adoption grew significantly among all physicians between 2016 and 2022
  - Factors that drove physicians to adopt a digital tool
- Improved clinical outcomes
- Work efficiencies
- Ability to reduce work stress/burnout
- Tools with the greatest adoption
  - Tele-visits at 14% in 2016 to 80% in 2020
  - Remote monitoring devices at 12% in 2016 to 30% in 2022

I predict that as both consumers and physicians continue to see myths busted, outcomes improved adoption rates will continue to advance.

## DIGITAL HEALTH PROGRAMS RESULTING IN IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES

As organizations sift through the pilots and result in digital health tools and programs, they are uncovering various benefits.

Take Ochsner Health one of the largest health systems in the Southeastern region of the US, which found that from a digital health pilot that there were benefits for their hypertension and type 2 diabetes patients.

What did Ochsner do? They introduced Digital Medicine Programs using:<sup>iv</sup>

- A digital device to send vital signs to care team(s)
- Created a personalized care plan
- Leveraged analytics

The program results were astounding from the researchers' perspectives. They found that half of all out-of-control hypertension patients reach a control level by 90 days among those that were enrolled in the Hypertension Program. They also found that 59% of patients with badly monitored diabetes reached a control level when enrolled in the Diabetes Program.

A follow-up to a series of new studies revealed positive outcomes for remote patient monitoring across a variety of illnesses and conditions.<sup>v</sup>

- For Veteran Affairs patients who suffered strokes and were remotely monitored, they recorded fewer emergency room visits than patients who were not monitored.
- Cancer patients who were receiving treatment, remote monitoring helped alleviate the severity of their symptoms.

Digital health is improving outcomes and efficiencies in areas yet to be identified. Continue to expect more myths busted as digital health matures, adoption rates increase across all tools, and results in health outcomes to improve. I predict over the next 18 to 24 months we will continue to see the digital landscape change and evolve toward expanding access, further improving health outcomes, and working to address areas of equity.

## HOW CAN TREXIN HELP?

If your organization needs assistance in culling together and or just needs support making sense of the masses of information your digital tools have collected since you implemented them, [please reach out to Trexin Consulting](#).



This TIP was written by Jessica Albrecht. Jessica welcomes comments and discussion on this topic and can be reached at [jessica.albrecht@trexin.com](mailto:jessica.albrecht@trexin.com).

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<sup>i</sup> Miller, J. (2022, September 23). Myths Busted: New Studies Show Telemedicine is Effective, Doesn't Reduce Access to Care. URM Newsroom. <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/news/story/myths-busted-new-studies-show-telemedicine-is-effective-doesnt-reduce-access-to-care>

<sup>ii</sup> Gonzalez, G. (2022, January 4). Outcomes from telemedicine just as good as in-person care, study shows. Beckers Hospital Review. <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/telehealth/outcomes-from-telemedicine-just-as-good-as-in-person-care-study-shows.html>

<sup>iii</sup> AMA digital health care 2022 study findings. (2022, September 28). American Medical Association. <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/research/ama-digital-health-care-2022-study-findings>

<sup>iv</sup> Melchionna, M. (2022, October 19). Ochsner Digital Health Pilot Improves Diabetes, Hypertension Outcomes. <https://mhealthintelligence.com/news/ochsner-digital-health-pilot-improves-diabetes-hypertension-outcomes>

<sup>v</sup> Young, M. (2022, October 1). New Studies Suggest Benefits of Remote Patient Monitoring. <https://www.reliasmedia.com/articles/new-studies-suggest-benefits-of-remote-patient-monitoring>