



AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY



Learning From the Rapid Expansion of Telehealth in Response to COVID-19

Our national response to COVID-19 has led to an exceptionally rapid expansion of the use of telehealth in all aspects of medicine and in all parts of the United States.

As the COVID pandemic enters its next phase, policymakers, health systems, healthcare professionals, and patients will want to understand: (1) what worked well and for whom, and (2) how to improve telehealth's safety, quality, and value moving forward.

Pressing questions related to telehealth's expansion include:

- Which healthcare services were most effectively transferred to virtual visits?
- What training is needed for healthcare professionals and patients to use telehealth successfully?
- How should telehealth be integrated and coordinated with in-person care?
- How can providers best ensure trust and confidentiality when using telehealth?
- How can tele-mentoring of healthcare professionals be used to expand implementation of evidence and best practices?
- How can providers and policymakers use telehealth to decrease disparities in healthcare access and increase equity in health outcomes?

What's Needed

- AHRQ will invest in rapid-cycle research grants to study the implementation and outcomes of telehealth expansion.
- AHRQ will fund three waves of research grants to allow both immediate and emerging questions to be addressed. In addition AHRQ will fund telehealth learning collaboratives and an initiative evaluation.
- By requiring early dissemination of research findings, we expect to begin sharing useful information within 4 to 6 months.
- **COST:** \$50 million over 3 years.

Why AHRQ

- No other HHS agency is currently engaged in evaluating the rapid expansion of telehealth and lessons learned.
- AHRQ has a long history of funding digital health research, including the initial funding for Project ECHO and research on health information exchanges.
- AHRQ is the lead Federal agency engaged in identifying what works - and what doesn't - in improving the safety and quality of healthcare.
- AHRQ has a proven track record of rapidly disseminating best practices from its research, as well as a history of trusted relationships with healthcare systems and providers.