

BLOG POST: TEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TELEMEDICINE

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As a self-funded employer concerned by the rising cost of health benefits, what should you know about telemedicine?

Here are 10 things you should know about how telemedicine is changing health care.

- 1. It's "unstoppable."** Many national experts have conceded that telemedicine is here to stay, despite ongoing debates about how it should be licensed and regulated at the state and national level.
- 2. It typically costs less,** although savings can vary. Teladoc, a leading telemedicine vendor, says it achieves an average savings of \$673 per claim when a telemedicine visit for minor ailments is compared to an in-person visit.
- 3. It's more than one kind of care.** Telemedicine is a broad term that covers many different types of health care services that are delivered remotely. The American Telemedicine Association describes telemedicine as "the use of medical information exchanged from one site to another via electronic communications to improve a patient's clinical health status."
- 4. It's moving to the workplace.** Health care providers are piloting worksite kiosks that enable video chats between the patient and the doctor. Some kiosks are equipped with devices for simple medical tests, such as taking your blood pressure. Kiosks and other telemedicine approaches can be integrated with an existing online clinic or used to launch onsite care.
- 5. \$49 price tag is common** for primary care offered directly to consumers via telemedicine. Walgreens and Cleveland Clinic are among the providers that charge \$49 for telemedicine visits.
- 6. When family members can't be at the bedside** of a critically-ill family member, some hospitals now provide updates via telemedicine. Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia uses an iPad, video camera and telehealth software to let family members see and hear doctors as they make "rounds" in the intensive care unit.
- 7. Rural hospitals and skilled nursing facilities use telemedicine** to connect patients to doctors without forcing them to travel for specialist care.
- 8. It's a quick solution for minor ailments.** Teladoc says the average wait time to see a doctor is 18.5 days, which compares to Teladoc's 8-minute average wait time for a primary care telemedicine visit.
- 9. Most people can connect.** When broadband Internet access is lacking, patients may be able to connect via cellular phone or satellite signals. But there are some remote areas where connections remain challenging or unavailable.
- 10. It's growing fast.** Telemedicine vendors are partnering with health care systems, national pharmacy chains, employers and other groups to create new options for consumers. Meanwhile, health care professionals continue to find new ways to use telemedicine to improve access to care. Revenue from the U.S. telehealth market is expected to grow from \$240 million in 2013 to \$1.9 billion by 2018, according to IHS, an information and analytics firm. That means telemedicine is likely coming soon to a computer, tablet or smartphone near you.

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What's Fueling the Demand for Telehealth: Four Factors

Reduce Health Care Costs





ER Visit: **\$1,354**²

UC Visit: **\$150**²

PCP Office Visit: **\$150**¹

E-Visit: \$50¹

Improve Access to Care

VS

On-Demand Telehealth Available 24/7/365⁶

18.5 days (444 hrs)

Average wait time for an appointment with PCP in 2014³


More Productive Workforce



Virtual visits saved an estimated **2.5 hours**, on average, of patients' time⁸

\$62.15 Productivity savings based on a average wage US worker of \$24.85⁹


Better Patient Experience



Average Wait Time

Telehealth	ER	UC	PCP
6 min ⁴	4 hr 7 min ⁴	30 min ²	19 min ⁵

Without telemedicine, **94%** of patients would travel more than **1 hr 16 min*** for medical care⁷



Sources:

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* MCOL estimates 70 miles = 1 hour 16 minutes, based on driving 55 mph

