

# Virtual visits come into their own

Driven by necessity; enabled by increased reimbursements, clinician adoption, and technology innovation

We will all remember 2020 as the year healthcare delivery faced unimaginable challenges and virtual visits became mainstream. But accessing care outside the typical in-office model has been around for decades. A playful idea for radio visits even appeared on a magazine cover in 1924.

In the 1960s, the medical community began rudimentary efforts to bring that idea to life. The USDA started a program of grants to improve access to both healthcare and education for rural residents, a program that continues today. Originally called “telehealth,” since the visits were by telephone, the means of communication progressed to email and texting. Today, videoconferencing is typical and is now known as “virtual visits” or “e-visits.”

In the simplest terms, virtual visits connect providers with patients online. Providers can be just about anywhere, with patients usually at home. These visits do require reliable internet access with capacity to stream video.

## Virtual visits are on the rise

Almost half (48%) of providers deliver care virtually.<sup>1</sup> The global virtual healthcare market is expected to grow 23% by 2025.<sup>2</sup> And virtual healthcare interactions are on pace to top 1 billion soon.<sup>3</sup>

### Virtual visits per week

by fee-for-service (FFS) Medicare beneficiaries<sup>4</sup>

Pre-pandemic

13,000

Last week of  
April 2020

Nearly 1,700,000



Built for Business

Smarter  
technology  
for all

Lenovo



# What's driving the surge in virtual visits?

Much of the increase is, of course, due to COVID-19, along with the expansion of reimbursements.<sup>5</sup> This new prevalence of virtual visits could well fuel greater adoption, which had been slow on the part of patients and providers.<sup>6</sup>

But even before the pandemic, virtual healthcare was beginning to trend. Why?



## High out-of-pocket health insurance costs

When asked about their priorities for the next five years, 42% of large and midsize employers (500 or more employees) identified “addressing healthcare affordability for low-paid employees” as an important or very important strategy.<sup>7</sup>



## Consumerization of healthcare

Today's patients want and expect convenience, flexibility, responsiveness, and choice.



## Growing commercial insurance e-visit coverage

More than half of Kaiser Permanente's physician visits are virtual visits.<sup>8</sup>



## Increasing inclusion in employee benefits

Almost 9 out of 10 large employers offer a telemedicine program.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, technology has been steadily advancing to enable virtual visits.

- New mobile health apps and wearable devices allow remote patient monitoring to track vitals and provide alerts about needed care.
- Patients use smartphones and tablets with videoconferencing platforms at home to connect with their providers. Family members can be invited to join these visits.
- Providers use laptops, desktops, and even mobile workstations to initiate virtual visits. From any location, they securely connect to the hospital network to access EHRs and other patient record systems. They can also collaborate with the extended care team and specialists.
- Personal devices purpose-built for healthcare videoconferencing are used from the hospital, an offsite office, or home — or can be used in patient rooms.



Built for Business

# The transformation of primary care

COVID-19 caused patients to begin avoiding doctors' offices, delaying routine visits, and canceling elective procedures. Yet in a recent survey, only 1 in 10 respondents said their health or a family member's health had gotten worse as a result of delayed care, and 86% said their health had stayed about the same.<sup>10</sup>

This supports the research findings that 70% of all doctor's office visits are unnecessary and 66% of all ED visits are non-emergencies.<sup>11</sup> Virtual primary care visits have the potential to bring these percentages way down. Quick, convenient access to a physician or nurse practitioner can resolve a range of non-urgent issues, reassuring patients and avoiding unneeded trips to the doctor's office or ED.

Primary care visits are now a fast-growing segment of virtual healthcare. One reason is that 45% of patients 18 to 29 years old and 28% of those aged 30 to 49 have no primary care physician. Virtual visits align with their preferences and the convenience may make these patients more likely to use virtual visit services.<sup>12</sup>



**70% of all doctor's office visits are unnecessary and 66% of all ED visits are non-emergencies.**



Built for Business



# Virtual is versatile

Virtual visits are now evolving to include inpatient care facilities. **Three innovative virtual visit models** emerged from the challenges of responding to the pandemic.

Providers are now conducting **virtual rounds** to supplement or replace daily bedside rounding. Checking in with patients without entering their rooms eliminates infection exposure and the need for PPE. Virtual inpatient visits give providers new flexibility and efficiency at a time of staffing shortages and high rates of physician burnout.

Short-staffed emergency departments have instituted **virtual triage** to deliver care faster.

Most poignant is the use of **virtual visits** for families who can't be together due to infection risk when babies are born or loved ones are dying.

Virtual technology is also ideal for the management of chronic conditions, keeping patients engaged and connected to clinicians who remotely monitor patient progress. Virtual connection delivers coaching and encouragement, supporting healthy habit formation and long-lasting behavior change.

## Virtual primary care visits are perfect for:



**Single encounters**  
for non-emergency issues



**Regular check-ins**  
for ongoing conditions  
under treatment



**Visits to discuss test results**  
or changes in treatment

## A made-for-healthcare laptop with features ideal for virtual visits

The Lenovo ThinkPad® T14 Healthcare Edition laptop, powered by the built-for-business Intel vPro® platform, easily transitions from clinical environments to virtual visits anywhere.

- Integrated privacy, including webcam privacy shutter
- Secure multi-factor authentication
- Rapid access with single sign-on
- Antimicrobial surface treatment
- Advanced built-in privacy and security features
- 16-hour battery life with rapid recharging
- Enhanced audio and video quality
- Lenovo services from deployment to 24/7/365 call center support



Built for Business

Lenovo

# Virtual visits are here to stay

This new model of care delivery will no doubt continue to prove its benefits as adoption increases. For patients, it provides convenient access to care from the comfort of home. For providers, it allows the efficiency and flexibility to focus on patients inside and outside the walls of the hospital or doctor's office. Virtual visits are opening doors for stronger patient-provider communication.

Lenovo Health has reimagined how technology powers patient engagement and makes communication and collaboration easy. Our proven reliability and security leadership are breaking down care delivery barriers and enabling virtual visits now and in the future.

When you're ready to equip your providers for the new world of care delivery, we can help.



Visit [www.Lenovo.com/Health](http://www.Lenovo.com/Health)  
to learn more.

#### Sources

- 1 <https://www.merrithawkins.com/news-and-insights/media-room/press/-Physician-Practice-Patterns-Changing-as-a-Result-of-COVID-19/>
- 2 <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-global-virtual-healthcare-market-is-expected-to-grow-from-usd-1-923-13-million-in-2018-to-usd-8-275-13-million-by-the-end-of-2025-at-a-compound-annual-growth-rate-cagr-of-23-17-301048781.html>
- 3 <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/03/telehealth-visits-could-top-1-billion-in-2020-amid-the-coronavirus-crisis.html>
- 4 <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20200715.454789/full/>
- 5 <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20200715.454789/full/>
- 6 <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/technology/low-adoption-telemedicine-may-spur-patient-migration-away-traditional-providers>
- 7 <https://www.mercer.com/newsroom/mercer-survey-finds-us-employers-shifting-to-innovative-strategies-to-make-healthcare-more-affordable-for-more-employees.html>
- 8 <https://news.careinnovations.com/blog/rise-of-virtual-visit-technology-what-it-means-for-patients-providers>
- 9 <https://www.mercer.com/newsroom/mercer-survey-finds-us-employers-shifting-to-innovative-strategies-to-make-healthcare-more-affordable-for-more-employees.html>
- 10 <https://www.startribune.com/people-have-stopped-going-to-the-doctor-most-seem-just-fine/571443862/>
- 11 <https://blog.ivrpowers.com/post/healthcare/70-percent-doctor-office-visits-are-unnecessary/>
- 12 <https://khn.org/news/spurred-by-convenience-millennials-often-spurn-the-family-doctor-model/>

© 2020 Lenovo. All rights reserved. Lenovo, the Lenovo logo, and ThinkPad are trademarks of Lenovo in the United States, other countries, or both. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. v1.00 September 2020.



Contact your **Lenovo Health Account Representative** or local **Business Partner**



Visit [www.Lenovo.com/Health](http://www.Lenovo.com/Health)



Follow us on Twitter **@LenovoUS**



Email Lenovo Health at  
**HealthTeam@Lenovo.com**



Built for Business

Smarter  
technology  
for all

Lenovo