



Preface

The Doctor Is Online: The New Virtual Landscape of Health Care



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Telehealth existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the sudden decrease in availability of face-to-face care resulted in rapid expansion of virtual technologies as patients and caregivers found alternative means to connect to each other.^{1,2} The expansion of telehealth was further facilitated by relaxation of billing rules under the Public Health Emergency determination.³ As primary care physicians, specialists, and direct-to-consumer companies expand telehealth offerings evidence on the quality, safety, cost-effectiveness, and equity of care continues to emerge but lags implementation in many areas.

In the post-COVID environment, we can expect telehealth to remain an established method of health care delivery. Video technology is available in the palm of the hand and in the functionality of electronic medical record. Patients will continue to demand increased convenience with less cost. Health care providers are challenged to adjust to this new reality, without the support of training or experience or solid evidence in many cases.

This issue seeks to provide primary care physicians with tools to address this challenge. Use of telehealth is explored in specific populations including pediatrics, adolescents, geriatrics, and prenatal care. Application of telehealth in the management of hypertension, diabetes, and behavioral care is discussed. Telehealth is examined in environments our patients access outside of primary care such as specialty and urgent care. Specific technologies, including remote patient monitoring and asynchronous care, are demonstrated. One article addresses the role of virtual care in medical education, to prepare our future physicians to use the technology effectively.

Evidence supporting the use of telehealth is included where available but we recognize that this is an emerging field and expert opinion is included where evidence is

unavailable. We greatly appreciate the efforts of all of our authors, who have been responding to recurrent COVID surges while contributing to this issue.

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