Teladoc
HEALTH

WHITE PAPER

Mental health and COVID-19: Leveraging virtual care to meet increased demand

Even before the pandemic, mental health conditions were among the leading causes of illness and disability around the world.

The challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the mental health of people around the world. Anxiety about the possibility of getting sick, the stress of job loss, increased substance abuse and feelings of loneliness are just some of the ways that the pandemic has manifested in mental health challenges.[1] In fact, a 2020 United Nations policy brief concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic presents "the seeds of a major mental health crisis."[2]

To meet the greatly increasing need for mental healthcare services among individuals, virtual access to mental healthcare will be of vital importance.

Additional research findings

· In a May 2020 survey[3] released by the American Psychological Association, 46% of parents with children under 18 rated their average stress level related to the pandemic as high—defined as an 8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.

· A 2020 TIME.com report[4] revealed that 52% of employees surveyed said they had experienced poor mental health at their current workplace.

· A 2020 Teladoc Health study of 2,505 employees across the U.S. and Canada found that nearly half (47%) of U.S. respondents claimed their mental health had been negatively impacted by the virus—affecting women slightly more often than men.
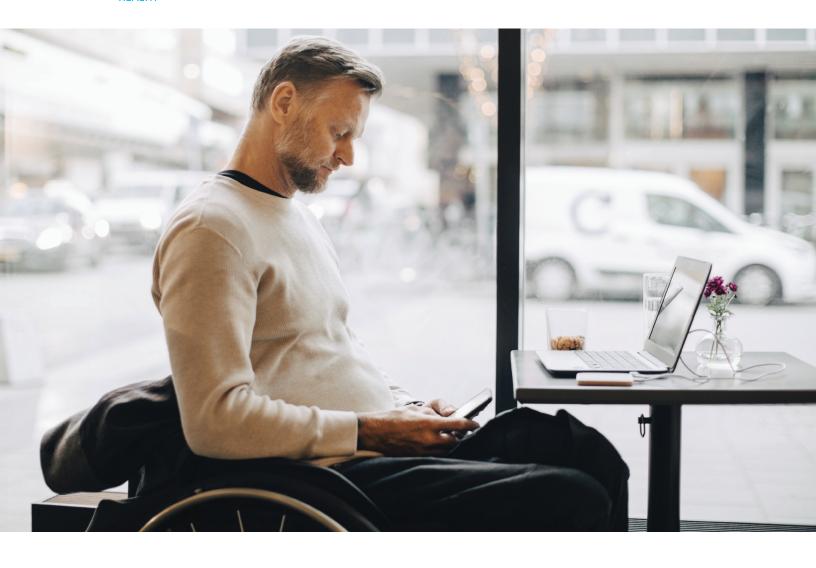

"The impact of this global pandemic can be viewed as a widespread traumatic event. Similar to how Posttraumatic Stress Disorder can develop in those who are exposed to a terrible traumatic event that changes their personal sense of safety, this pandemic has shaken all of our senses of safety, and to some degree we have all been traumatized by this event."

Desreen Dudley, PsyD Clinical Psychologist, Teladoc Health

Barriers to in-office care

For some people, traditional, in-office mental healthcare may be a viable option. But, there are barriers to adoption. Time constraints, concerns about COVID-19, limited appointment availability and, most troubling, a sense of shame about needing care—are all issues that prevent people from getting the care they need.

The age of accessing mental healthcare virtually has arrived

Virtual access to board-certified psychiatrists and licensed psychologists/therapists by phone or video allows individuals to get the care they need safely while removing many of the barriers preventing in-person care. Through virtual care, individuals can build relationships with the providers of their choice and receive ongoing mental health support for a wide range of conditions—when and where they feel most comfortable.

Virtual care can address many common mental health conditions, including:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- Stress

- Panic disorder
- Family/marriage issues
- Grief
- Eating disorders

- Substance abuse
- Trauma
- Work pressures
- ADHD

Teladoc Health Mental Health Care: a four-step process

Initiate
The member provides basic information, including eligibility, by Teladoc app, phone or web.

Schedule
The member selects a preferred mental health provider and schedules a virtual visit.

Consult
The member speaks with the selected provider and builds an ongoing relationship.

Support
Ongoing mental health management support is provided.

REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES.

Jack

Meet Jack.* In late March of 2020, Jack's employer shifted to a work-from-home model in response to the pandemic. Soon after, the elementary school Jack's children attend adopted virtual learning. Jack's wife, a registered nurse, was deemed an essential worker and took on additional hours due to an increase in COVID-19 cases. Jack worried about his wife's health and struggled to balance his workload and his children's new routine. He felt the quality of his work and his relationship with his family begin to suffer.

That's when Jack decided to reach out to Teladoc Health, a service provided to him at no cost from his employer. After registering online, Jack was able to select a psychiatrist and pick a time that worked for his schedule. Jack spoke with the psychiatrist by video for 30 minutes and scheduled a follow-up visit for the next week.

After four virtual visits with his provider, Jack felt a huge weight had been lifted off his chest. His relationship with his family had improved, and he was able to better focus on his work. Today, Jack still experiences the occasional bout of stress, but he now has the tools to manage it more effectively.

*Fictional representation of a member struggling with anxiety.

Although he tried to put on a brave face, Jack felt completely overwhelmed.

Cost savings for employers

In addition to life-changing benefits for employees, Teladoc Health Mental Health Care delivers substantial cost savings for employers. Not only is virtual care less expensive to deliver, but it often preempts an employee's need to seek higher-cost forms of care. In addition, employees who participate in virtual mental healthcare tend to be more productive at work and less likely to miss work in order to seek care.

In patients suffering from major depression, early access to care has been shown to result in:

26%
reduction in ER visits

30%
reduction in hospitalizations

Conclusion

The need for effective mental healthcare has never been greater than it is today. While there is still a role for traditional, in-person care, it presents significant barriers to adoption for many people. Additionally, high-quality mental healthcare accessed through a virtual setting enables employers to realize cost-of-care savings.

References

[1]https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/mental-health.
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[4]https://time.com/collection/davos-2020-mental-health/5764680/mental-health-at-work.

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Teladoc Health is the global virtual care leader, helping millions of people resolve their healthcare needs with confidence. Together with our clients and partners, we are continually modernizing the healthcare experience and making high-quality healthcare a reality for more people and organizations around the world.