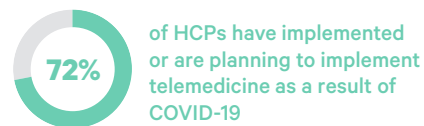# Maximising the impact of telehealth in the EU

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Since the start of the pandemic, telehealth has grown in popularity across Europe. However, not all countries have adapted to all the new technologies and virtual practices at the same pace. For pharma brands to be successful, a variety of factors should be considered, from audience needs to HCP expectations, as well as each country's regulations and technical limitations.

While the recent approval of vaccines that are now being rolled out across the EU may signify the beginning of the end to this pandemic, the experiences that people have had during this time have already profoundly changed our daily lives, especially our approach to healthcare. As pharma marketers, it's important to understand how these changes will continue to affect our work and what opportunities we have to engage with our customers. In this article, we will explore what's driving the telehealth trend and how to succeed.

In the past, the EU has been slow to adopt innovative, digitally enabled healthcare delivery platforms due to regulatory issues (largely privacy related), resistance from doctors, and existing bureaucracy within health systems. However, as the COVID-19 crisis has significantly reduced face-to-face appointments across Europe, **there's been an increase of more than 50% of telephone or video appointments** in their place.

57% of consultations are now virtual

72% of HCPs have implemented or are planning to implement telemedicine as a result of COVID-19

The increase in usage of telehealth in each country is **directly linked to how hard that nation has been hit by COVID-19**. For example, last year in Germany, where they had managed to keep infections under control, the decline in office visits and increase in telehealth appointments was much less marked compared to countries like Italy, Spain, and the UK, which had experienced much higher rates of infection.

83%	**55%**	**45%**	**26%**	**20%**
UK	Spain	Italy	France	Germany

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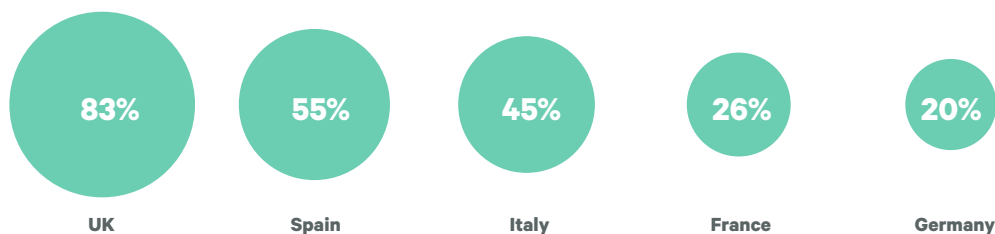
Maximising the impact of telehealth in the EU

Now, in less than a year, video conferencing, remote monitoring, and other digital communications have grown exponentially during the COVID pandemic, becoming the "new normal" for many patients and physicians. And the response has been good, with **63% of patients and 74% of physicians describing their experience using telehealth as "positive" and "effective**."

63% of patients who have used telehealth/digital health describe their experience very positive

74% of HCPs rated telehealth as effective

So, how can pharma brands develop a successful engagement strategy when using telehealth?

- **Put your audience first:** When stating your objectives, establish patient benefits for using telehealth and support platforms. Develop added value and personalised content that truly speaks to them and their condition.

- **Develop a community:** Patients aren't the only ones affected by their disease. Their families and carers are critical members of your audience. Engage with them through video or audio content and give them an opportunity to share their stories and experiences on their journey.

- **Disease management is not just about treatments:** Provide a holistic approach beyond dosages and side effects. Talk about the impact on mental health, and provide tips such as mindfulness techniques and diet support.

- **Make HCPs your advocates:** Collaborate with physicians to promote your platform. HCPs can show patients the benefits of certain features and content assets and engage with them online.

- **Keep learning and improving what you do:** Gather user feedback to develop more engaging content assets and site features.

If you would like to discuss telehealth best practices and learn more about this unique approach to engage with your customers, please email us at business@evokegroup.com*.*

Sources:
1. *2020 International Edition Dashboard Copyright © 2020 KANTAR*
2. *ZS, Adapting to Covid (2020), https://www.zs.com/content/dam/pdfs/Adapting_to_COVID-19.pdf*
3. *ZS, Emerging from COVID-19 (June 20)*