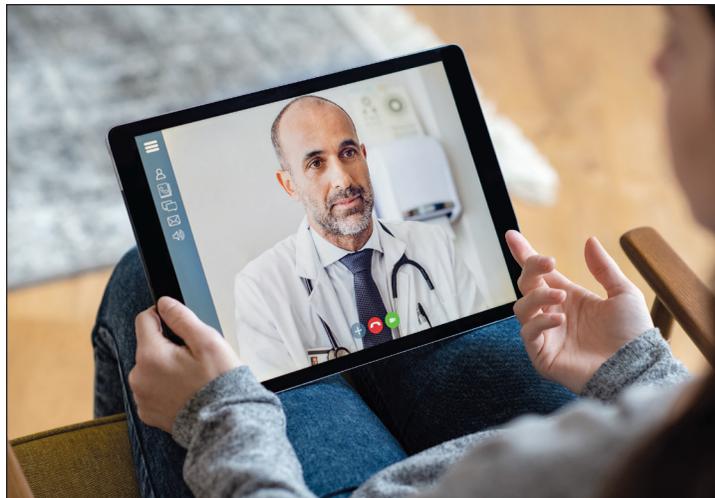


New study confirms that telehealth is here to stay

NEW YORK — According to a new study by Worldwide Partners, the effect that COVID-19 is having on digital health adoption is set to be transformative. The survey that was conducted shows technology playing a crucial and growing role in mitigating the health care crisis, especially via telehealth.

The data in the survey is based on the GlobalWebIndex Work data set, which profiles the attitude and behavior of 17,000 business professionals across 10 global markets.

While these services existed precrisis, their popularity has skyrocketed in the wake of COVID-19, as many providers have moved toward the model for routine care that respects social distancing. In the U.S. and U.K. only about 16% of consumers said they ever used telehealth pre-COVID-19. By peak lockdown this had nearly tripled to 45%. Furthermore, 53% of internet users said they would consider using telehealth to get screened for coronavirus symptoms. COVID has accelerated the pace of technology adoption from years to months and faster. One needs only look to the rapid transition to work-from-home and ZOOM meetings in businesses everywhere.



According to Andrew Bast, chief strategy officer of Greater Than One, a member of the Worldwide Partners network, “telehealth, and digital care generally, needs to become a permanent feature of our health care system. It took a pandemic to remove the last barriers to its adoption — reimbursement concerns, security and privacy, technical know-how — and finally force a seat open for digital care at the health care delivery table. We cannot let that seat be taken away when COVID is finally tamed.”

The study also showed that

caregivers, manufacturers and marketers in the health care space need to balance how they implement and communicate the benefits of technology with the inherent need for a human touch. To illustrate this point, when it comes to their current care nearly one-third of U.S. and U.K. consumers complain that doctors’ appointments can feel rushed, and one-quarter feel that they don’t get the full and personal attention of their doctors.

The one-to-one relationship between a doctor and the patient is irreplaceable, but it is also transferable. Consumers are open to interacting with doctors via telehealth services, even if they have familiarity only with direct in-person experiences — and they bring their expectations and their realities into the virtual realm.

“Many patients with preexisting conditions made per-

sonal sacrifices to withdraw completely or reduce their engagement with the health care system because of COVID for the greater good of all,” says Bast. “Now, health brands must quickly reactivate these

care vehicle,” said Bast. “People with autism, children with severe neurological distress or trauma, and others benefit from familiar surroundings and controlled stimuli. Telehealth, for example, provides the trater

‘COVID-19 has forced a rapid change in the way health care is provided.’

patient populations to engage them again by acknowledging their altruism and endorsing the legitimacy of their very real and human health needs. Telehealth is the perfect vehicle to monitor, assess, evaluate and modify treatment plans as needed without adding further risks to an already risk-burdened population.”

The challenge of balancing the merits of digital care against the possibility of impersonal care are likely to intensify due to artificial intelligence. One of the primary concerns with integrating AI into the health care experience is that it will chip away the personal bond between doctors and patients. Consumers are embracing digital care, but they worry about AI reducing the quality of those interactions with their doctor. Digital care needs to emphasize the value that is uniquely endemic to its format, and not just compare itself against the more familiar in-person interaction.

“Pandemic aside, for many vulnerable populations telehealth is the optimal point of

a window into which they can see their patient in their best, and natural, environment to more accurately diagnose and manage neurological, psychological and behavioral issues.”

Industry, policy makers and providers seek to future-proof for the next pandemic. As the entrepreneurial base introduces new digital innovations, fundamental changes will occur to the future patient journey.

“The threat of COVID remains,” said Bast, who pointed out that Greater Than One is constantly monitoring the health crisis on a day-to-day basis and working with clients to adapt to the evolving landscape. “COVID has forced a rapid change in the way health care is provided. Imagining a future where changes to the patient journey, adoption of AI, and increased use of digital therapeutics are organically integrated and create value for all is what we are seeking to build at Greater Than One. We’re partnering with our clients to provide them with the strategies and perspective they need to make that future a reality.”

USP’s commitment to patient safety endures

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difference between a prescription medication, an over-the-counter product and a dietary supplement.

“The pharmacist knows these products are really different in the terms of regulation, and that consumers should approach them differently. The pharmacist needs to empower the patient. A consumer really has to be his or her own watchdog when it comes to something like a dietary supplement, which does not have to earn the same type of approval from the FDA as a prescription or over-the-counter medicine.”

USP is doing what it can to fill the void, offering manufacturers of vitamins and other nutritional supplements the opportunity to have ingredients audited and tested; products that go through the process successfully carry the USP Verified logo.

If the pharmacy profession is to retain its status as a pillar of the health care system, it too will need to adapt to the new modalities cited by Piervincenzi. The industry may already have some catching up to do.

“When it comes to things like personalized medicine and digital therapeutics, pharmacists are not moving fast enough, and

these things may pass them by,” he notes. “My fear is that pharmacy may be falling behind in these new technologies.

“If pharmacists don’t seize these opportunities, it will make it much harder for them to move up the care ladder, to be more involved in patient care, which I personally think is better and smarter and cheaper for

‘The pharmacist needs to empower the patient.’

the health care system. So, in and around personalized medicine, take cannabis as an example, there is a need to really leverage pharmacists’ expertise and knowledge.”

As retail pharmacy strives to overcome its inertia regarding the new modalities, members of the profession can count on USP to do what it has done for the past 200 years — create scientifically sound standards for medicines and the ingredients that go into them, foster communication across the supply chain and, as Piervincenzi says, “make sure our partners know the truth.”

Genoa Healthcare marks 20th year

RENTON, Wash. — Genoa Healthcare, a leading provider of behavioral health pharmacy services, in August marked its 20th year of serving individuals with mental health issues, substance use disorders, and other complex, chronic health conditions.

To celebrate the milestone, Genoa employees across the U.S. are engaged in 20 “acts of kindness” in their local communities through volunteer opportunities, donations and outreach to those in need.

“With one in five Americans dealing with mental health issues, ensuring access to quality behavioral health care and medications is more important than ever,” said Genoa chief executive officer Joe Douglas. “This anniversary marked an important milestone in Genoa’s continued commitment to expanding access to mental health pharmacy services and improving outcomes for the people we serve.”

Partnering with community mental health clinics, Genoa provides pharmacy services to people in the same facility

they receive their care, making it easier to obtain needed medications and leading to improved health outcomes. Co-locating Genoa pharmacies in local care facilities enables Genoa to build relationships with individuals and their care providers, resulting in more than 90% medication adherence, compared to 50% at typical retail pharmacies.

‘It’s a privilege to help make a difference.’

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, access to medications and mental health services is increasingly important to ensure positive health outcomes for patients. To help keep consumers safe and healthy, Genoa is offering curbside pickup and free home delivery for needed medications, and increasing its pharmacist outreach to provide care and



Joe Douglas

human connection during an uncertain time.

It’s a privilege to be able to make a difference in the lives of those we serve,” said Douglas. “We’re honored to have an impact on our partners’ ability to deliver great care, on the advancement of the behavioral health industry and, most importantly, on our consumers’ well-being.”

Genoa provides pharmacy, telepsychiatry and clinical pharmacy services to more than 1 million consumers at over 530 sites in 47 states across the U.S.