

Telehealth Utilization in NYS Medicaid

Kate Bliss, MSW, MPH, Melissa Miller, MHA,
Nathan Stengrevics, BS, Shirley Belotte, MS, MPH,
Adaobi Okoro, MPH
(New York State Department of Health)
Telehealth.Policy@health.ny.gov

Introduction

In New York, Medicaid is the largest insurer, with over 7.4 million enrollees (representing 38% of the total population in 2022). During the public health emergency, telehealth utilization among NYS Medicaid enrollees spiked. Nearly 15 million telehealth services were used by 1.7 million enrollees in 2020 and similar utilization was seen in 2021. In response to this sudden growth, the NYS Department of Health conducted descriptive and comparative analyses of telehealth utilization within NYS Medicaid in 2020 to better understand usage patterns and to describe correlations between telehealth use and quality outcomes.

Methods

A retrospective cohort analysis was used to compare demographics and health outcomes for telehealth utilizers (n=1,738,350) to those who did not utilize any telehealth services in 2020 (n=2,973,258). A member was included in the telehealth cohort if they had one or more service delivered via telehealth during the year. Medicaid members who were dually enrolled in Medicare were excluded from the analysis, as were any members who did not use any services in the year.

Results

	Total Members	Telehealth Group	Comparison Group
		1,738,350	2,973,258
Age			
Under 21	587,851 (34%)	1,460,457 (49%)	
21+	1,150,499 (66%)	1,512,801 (51%)	
Gender			
Female	1,002,858 (58%)	1,541,368 (52%)	
Male	735,492 (42%)	1,431,890 (48%)	
Region			
NYC	1,223,233 (70%)	2,097,459 (71%)	
Rest of State	515,117 (30%)	875,799 (29%)	
Clinical Risk <small>(not available for all members, based on 3M Clinical Risk Groups)</small>			
"Healthy"	469,355 (27%)	1,992,083 (67%)	
Other	1,268,995 (73%)	981,175 (33%)	

NCOA HEDIS Measure	Telehealth Group Rate	Comparison Group Rate
Engagement of Alcohol & Other /drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment	▲ 32.9	25.3
Initiation of Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse or Dependence Treatment	▲ 86.5	80.0
Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness (30 Days)	▲ 81.4	70.3
Follow-Up After Hospitalization for Mental Illness (7 Days)	▲ 64.3	54.9
Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) Poor Control (>9.0%)	▼ 84.3	79.4
Cervical Cancer Screening	▲ 68.7	61.4

▲ indicates a higher measure result is desirable

Notes:

- Table 1 compares demographics among telehealth users and those who used services, but not telehealth in 2020. The telehealth group included a larger proportion of older members, members who identify as female, and members with higher clinical risk groups.
- Table 2 compares the groups' rates on select National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures. Measures are displayed in table 2 if there was a 5-point difference (or more) between the two rates. Differences in rates were not measured for statistical significance.

Discussion

Among the telehealth cohort, an analysis of telehealth services indicated evaluation and management and psychotherapy were the most frequently used telehealth services. When comparing quality measures using HEDIS specifications, the telehealth cohort had moderately higher (better) rates on several prevention and screening measures and significantly higher rates on several behavioral health measures.

In NYS Medicaid, telehealth has been broadly used, and differences in member demographics warrant additional research. Additionally, future research should explore the utilization and impact of type of telehealth (audio-visual vs audio only), as well as explore telehealth effectiveness by service type (physical health vs behavioral health).

1.7 Million NYS Medicaid enrollees used telehealth in 2020 and had markedly better rates on several behavioral health quality measures compared to enrollees who did not use telehealth.



Additional Tables and Figures

Member Age Group	Telehealth Group	Comparison Group
Under 1 year	26,371 (2%)	91,802 (3%)
1-5 years	139,271 (8%)	385,025 (13%)
6-18 years	369,845 (21%)	861,587 (29%)
19-20 years	52,564 (3%)	122,043 (4%)
21-64 years	1,114,465 (64%)	1,476,674 (50%)
65 years and older	36,034 (2%)	36,127 (1%)

Additional NCOA HEDIS Measures	Telehealth Group	Comparison Group
Postpartum Care	▲ 6.4	6.2
Prenatal Care	▲ 48.5	46.0
Antidepressant Medication Management - Effective Acute Phase Treatment	▲ 58.2	54.5
Antidepressant Medication Management - Effective Continuation Phase Treatment	▲ 44.6	40.0
Adherence to Antipsychotic Medications for Individuals with Schizophrenia	▲ 69.0	66.8
Diabetes Screening for People w/ Schizophrenia or Bipolar Disorder Using Antipsychotic Medications	▲ 74.1	73.4
Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Eye Exams	▼ 49.5	46.0
Chlamydia Screening in Women	▲ 69.7	68.3
Childhood Immunization Status - Combination 3	▲ 14.8	11.9
Immunizations for Adolescents - Combination	▲ 26.3	22.5
Asthma Medication Ratio	▲ 56.7	56.0

