

Telemedicine is as effective as in-person visits for children with asthma

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Allergists are the best-trained medical specialists to treat asthma, but not everyone lives close to an allergist. Children who live hundreds of miles from the nearest allergist may not be receiving the best and most cost-effective care.

A new study in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, the scientific publication of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) shows that telemedicine for the treatment of asthma can be as effective as an in-person visit.

"We found that children seen by telemedicine using real-time video conferencing and digital exam equipment was just as effective as in-person visits," says allergist Jay Portnoy, MD, past ACAAI president and lead author of the study. "In addition, there were high levels of satisfaction by the kids and their parents, regarding the long-distance care."

In the study, patients who scheduled an appointment to be seen for asthma in the allergy clinic at Children's Mercy Hospital (CMH) in Kansas City, and who lived long distances from the hospital, were identified. They were offered a choice of keeping their original in-person appointment, or changing it to a telemedicine visit. The telemedicine option involved a visit to a local clinic. The control group of patients was seen at the allergy clinic at CMH. The two groups were followed over six months.

The telemedicine sessions required a registered nurse or respiratory therapist at the site to operate the telemedicine equipment. This allowed the allergist to see and hear the patient in real-time, and to pan and zoom a wide-angle camera. There was a digital stethoscope for listening to heart and lungs, and a digital otoscope for examining ears and nose.

"All of those seen—whether in the clinic or by [telemedicine](#) - showed an improvement in asthma control over the 6 months," says allergist Chitra Dinakar, MD, ACAAI Fellow and study author. "We were encouraged because sometimes those with the greatest need for an asthma specialist live in underserved areas such as rural or inner-city communities where allergists aren't always available. The study shows these kids can get effective care from a specialist, even if they don't happen to live close to where an allergist practices."

Allergists are the specialists best trained to treat [asthma](#) and allergies. To find an allergist to treat your child, use the ACAAI [allergist](#) locator.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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