

# Telemedicine visits save families time and money

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Patients and families who use telemedicine for sports medicine appointments saved an average of \$50 in travel costs and 51 minutes in waiting and visit time, according to a new study by Nemours Children's Health System. Each telemedicine visit also saved the health system an average of \$24 per patient, researchers reported at the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition.

"There's a constant need to innovate care delivery to demonstrate value to [patients](#) and families," said Alfred Atanda Jr., MD, an orthopedic surgeon at the Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children and author of the study. "Nemours' tech-savvy care environment provides another way to get patients the care they need—where and when they need it. We were able to do so while saving families time and money."

In a cohort study of 120 patients younger than 18 who had at least one telemedicine visit between September, 2015 and August, 2016, the Nemours researchers compared total time of clinical visit, percentage of time spent with attending surgeon, and wait time, to data from in-person visits in the department. Data were collected for postoperative evaluations, surgical/imaging discussions, and follow-up visits. Demographic data and diagnosis were recorded from the [electronic medical record](#).

The findings support the use of telemedicine to reduce costs for both the patient and hospital system, while maintaining high levels of patient satisfaction, researchers said. After each visit, parents were asked to

complete a five-item satisfaction survey. Ninety-one percent of parents found the application easy to download, 98 percent would be interested in future telemedicine visits, and 99 percent would recommend telemedicine to other families.

The study, which was conducted in a pediatric sports medicine practice, also found that the percentage of time spent with the provider was significantly greater for telemedicine than for in-person visits (88% vs. 15% of visit time). Families also saved significant travel time and expense, avoiding an average of 85 miles of driving, resulting in \$50 of savings in transportation cost per telemedicine visit.

Researchers said the study demonstrates that telemedicine can successfully be used in pediatric subspecialties to maximize healthcare resources and stretch the availability and expertise of the limited number of pediatric subspecialty providers.

"We know that telemedicine is often looked to for common childhood ailments, like cold and flu, or skin rashes. But we wanted to look at how telemedicine could benefit patients within a particular specialty such as [sports medicine](#)," said Atanda. "As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve and the emphasis on value and satisfaction continues to grow, telemedicine may be utilized by providers as a mechanism to keep costs and resource utilization low, and to comply with payor requirements."

Nemours has implemented [telemedicine](#) throughout its health system with direct-to-consumer care for acute, chronic, and post-surgical appointments, as well as through its partner hospitals, schools, and even cruise ships. Nemours CareConnect is a 24/7 on-demand pediatric telehealth program which provides families access to Nemours pediatricians through a smartphone, tablet, or computer—whether they are at home, school, or even on the sports field. If necessary, the physician may order a prescription, using geo-location service on the

smartphone or tablet, and send it to the nearest pharmacy.

Provided by Nemours Children's Health System

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