

Use of telemedicine low for substance use disorder treatment

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(HealthDay)—The use of telemedicine for substance use disorder (tele-

SUD) is relatively low in a commercially insured population, according to a study published in the December issue of *Health Affairs*.

Haiden A. Huskamp, Ph.D., from Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues describe how tele-SUD is being used and identify characteristics of tele-SUD users using claims data from 2010 to 2017. They note several key regulatory and reimbursement barriers to greater use of tele-SUD and note that both Congress and the states are considering or have passed legislation to address these barriers.

The researchers found that despite a rapid increase during the study period (from 0.62 to 3.05 visits per 1,000 people), the overall rates of tele-SUD were low, especially relative to the growth in telemental health. Tele-SUD was mainly used to complement in-person care; those with relatively severe SUD used tele-SUD disproportionately.

"Tele-SUD could improve treatment engagement and outcomes by providing additional sources or types of SUD treatment that could help patients overcome transportation, distance, or stigma barriers," the authors write. "Recent legislative and regulatory changes, particularly those that could facilitate the prescribing of opioid use disorder medications via telemedicine, could alter care models that incorporate tele-SUD and expand access to SUD care, particularly in rural areas."

More information: [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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