

## Only one in four U.S. hospitals with ICUs have tele-ICU services

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(HealthDay)—In 2018, half of U.S. hospitals had the capacity to conduct

telehealth-based outpatient visits, while only one in four had tele-intensive care unit (tele-ICU) capabilities, according to a research letter published online April 30 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Snigdha Jain, M.D., from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and colleagues used data from the 2018 American Hospital Association survey to evaluate the proportion of hospitals that reported availability of two types of telemedicine services: telehealth consultation for outpatient office visits and tele-ICU (audio-visual communication to allow virtual staffing of ICU patients by remote critical care specialists).

The researchers found that 47.6 percent of 4,711 hospitals reported providing telehealth-based outpatient services. These hospitals were more frequently large, private, nonprofit teaching hospitals. There were no significant differences with respect to the proportion of rural and critical-access hospitals providing these services. Just over one-quarter of hospitals with ICUs (26.8 percent) reported tele-ICU capabilities. These hospitals were more frequently nonprofit private hospitals, and a smaller proportion were rural or critical-access hospitals. There was substantial regional variation in the availability of outpatient telemedicine services, with 25 states or territories reporting availability in fewer than half of the hospitals. Wide variation was similarly seen for tele-ICU availability, ranging from no tele-ICU at hospitals in Puerto Rico to availability in nearly four of five hospitals in Wisconsin.

"Given that COVID-19 requires reorganization of health care delivery, a large proportion of hospitals will need to develop infrastructure for both office visits and tele-ICU," the authors write.

One author disclosed financial ties to the medical device and insurance industries.

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