

Behavioral, psych condition care shifted to telemedicine during COVID-19

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(HealthDay)—Office-based visits for behavioral and psychiatric

conditions decreased in association with the COVID-19 pandemic, although increases in telemedicine visits offset these decreases, according to a research letter published online Nov. 17 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Omar Mansour, from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and colleagues characterized quarterly telemedicine and office-based [visits](#) from the first quarter of 2018 (2018Q1) through the [second quarter](#) of 2020 (2020Q2) and focused on care for six of the most prevalent behavioral and [psychiatric conditions](#).

The researchers found that for the six conditions, total visits decreased from an average of 15.9 million during the [first quarter](#) of 2018 and 2019 to 13.0 million in 2020Q1 (18 percent decrease) and then increased to 15.8 million in 2020Q2. There was a decrease noted in office-based visits, from an average quarterly volume of 15.5 million before 2020 to 11.9 and 5.3 million in 2020Q1 and 2020Q2, respectively. Telemedicine visits accounted for fewer than 3 percent of visits before 2020 and increased to 9 and 66 percent of visits during 2020Q1 and 2020Q2 (1.1 and 10.5 million, respectively). Even after the shift to telemedicine starting in 2020, most visits were subsequent visits rather than new visits.

"Given concerns about the potential deleterious effects of the pandemic on the behavioral and psychiatric needs of vulnerable populations as well as the implementation of policies to mitigate such harms, the increases in [telemedicine visits](#) are noteworthy," the authors write.

Two authors disclosed financial ties to the health care and life science industries.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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