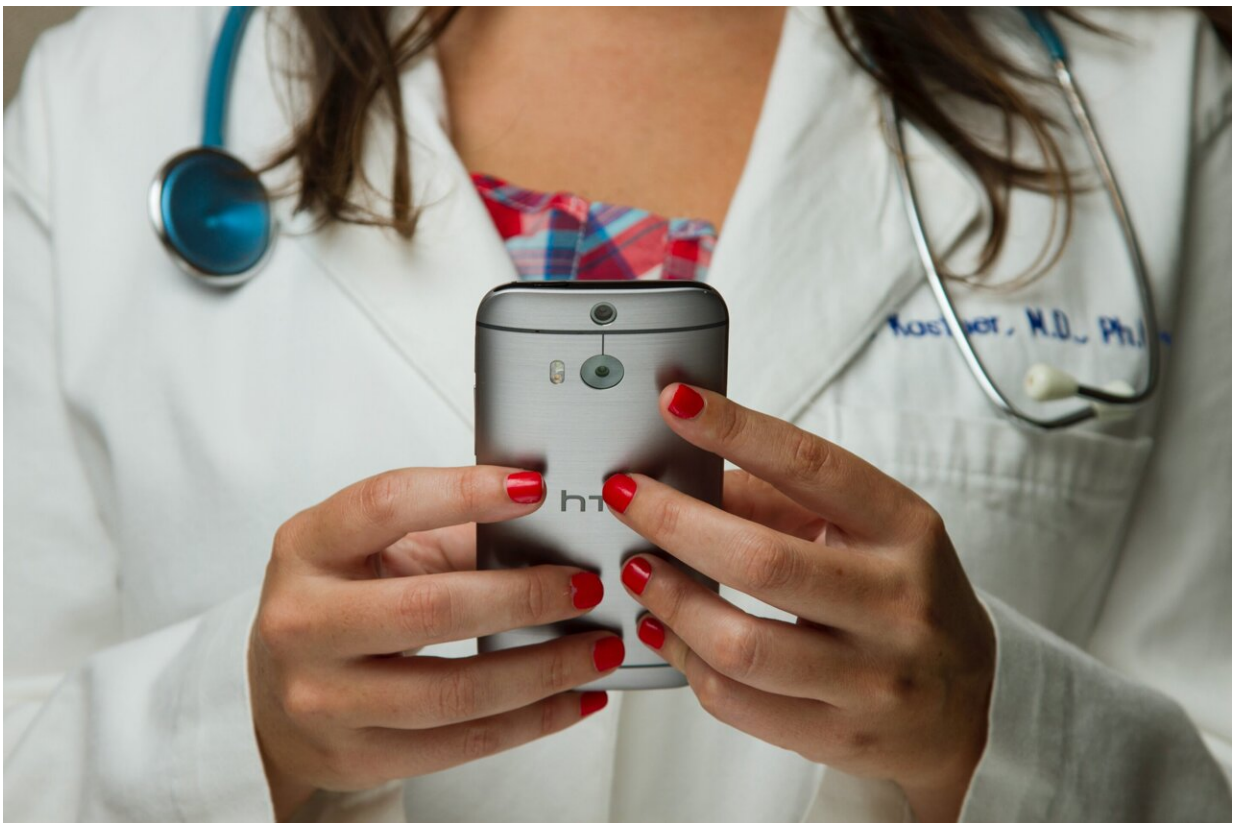


Exploring the effectiveness of telehealth in opioid use disorder

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The majority of individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD) face access barriers to evidence-based treatment. While the COVID-19 pandemic offered an opportunity to address OUD treatment access barriers by

allowing for expanded use of telehealth, is it not yet clear if this technology will help eliminate those barriers or exacerbate pre-existing treatment inequities.

A study of staff working with marginalized patients at low-barrier treatment programs in Philadelphia has highlighted how telehealth can facilitate treatment for many with OUD; prescribers and staff in the study indicated that telehealth has lowered access barriers to treatment. However, they also shared that the [digital divide](#) still limits the effectiveness of this technology and their concerns that telehealth visits many not be as in-person treatment for some patients who struggle to engage in [treatment](#).

"Telehealth may address many access issues. However, barriers to implementation remain, including patient ability and desire to attend healthcare appointments virtually," explains lead-investigator Shoshana V. Aronowitz, Ph.D., MSHP, FNP-BC, Assistant Professor in Penn Nursing's Department of Family and Community Health. "In addition, the potential for [telehealth](#) models to extend OUD care to patients currently underserved by in-person models may partially depend on clinician comfort treating patients deemed unstable via this modality."

Results of the study have been published in an article, "Telehealth for Opioid Use Disorder Treatment in Low-Barrier Clinic Settings: An Exploration of Clinician and Staff Perspectives" in *Harm Reduction Journal*, which is available online.

Coauthors of the article include Eden Engel-Rebitzer, Zachary Meisel, Eugenia South, and Margaret Lowenstein, all of the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine; Abby Dolan and Kehinde Oyekanmi, both of the University of Pennsylvania Center for Emergency Care Policy and Research; and David Mandell of the Penn Center for Mental Health.

More information: Shoshana V. Aronowitz et al, Telehealth for opioid use disorder treatment in low-barrier clinic settings: an exploration of clinician and staff perspectives, *Harm Reduction Journal* (2021). [DOI: 10.1186/s12954-021-00572-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-021-00572-7)

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