

Disparities seen in telehealth use for cancer care during pandemic

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Racial, geographic, and socioeconomic disparities were seen in

telehealth use among patients initiating cancer treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, held from June 3 to 7 in Chicago.

Jenny Guadamuz, Ph.D., from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, and colleagues assessed demographic and socioeconomic factors associated with telemedicine use among [patients](#) initiating treatment for 21 common cancers at community oncology clinics. The national Flatiron Health deidentified database was used to identify 24,164 adult cancer patients who initiated first-line [cancer treatment](#) between March 2020 and September 2021 with follow-up through December 2021.

The researchers found that Black patients were less likely to use telemedicine services than White patients. Telemedicine use was also lower among patients without documented insurance versus patients with commercial and Medicare insurance. Compared with patients in [urban areas](#), those in rural and suburban areas were less likely to use telemedicine services. Patients living in the least affluent areas had lower telemedicine use than those in the most affluent areas.

"Telemedicine can improve access to timely cancer care, but as this study points out, telemedicine must be available equitably, so that every patient can access the care they need and deserve," Everett E. Vokes, M.D., president of ASCO, said in a statement.

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