

Telehealth ups engagement for medicaid patients with mental health diagnosis

November 15 2022



High telehealth availability at federally qualified health centers (FQHCs)

was associated with better care engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic for patients enrolled in Medicaid who had mental health diagnoses, according to a research letter published online Nov. 15 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Megan B. Cole, Ph.D., from the Boston University School of Public Health, and colleagues assessed whether FQHC-level telehealth availability was associated with visit rates for 11,267 patients with mental health diagnoses (e.g., depression, anxiety, bipolar disorders) enrolled in Medicaid. The analysis included data from [adult patients](#) (aged 18 to 64 years) enrolled in Medicaid with any baseline mental health diagnosis seen at the Community Care Cooperative, the largest FQHC-based, Medicaid accountable care organization in the United States.

The researchers found that visit rates declined across all FQHCs during the COVID-19 pandemic, although high telehealth availability was associated with a larger relative increase in visit rates among patients with mental health diagnoses (incidence rate ratio, 2.07) versus lower telehealth availability. Results were similar across specific diagnoses of depression, anxiety, stressor-related, or mood disorders. Additionally, high telehealth availability was associated with a relative increase of 7.67 percentage points in the likelihood of having a follow-up visit within 30 days of a mental health-related emergency department visit.

"This study suggests that care delivery models that support telehealth as part of mental health care may be associated with improved engagement for [patients](#) enrolled in Medicaid," the authors write.

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

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Citation: Telehealth ups engagement for medicaid patients with mental health diagnosis (2022, November 15) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-11-telehealth-ups-engagement-medicaid-patients.html>

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