

Telemedicine: Bridging the Gap Between Healthcare Services and Rural Communities

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ST112: Introduction to Science, Technology, and Society

Introduction

Telemedicine is the use of modern technology and telecommunications to evaluate, diagnose, and treat patients.



<https://www.pchalliance.org/news/telemedicine>

The system enables increased accessibility to healthcare services that would otherwise not be available in rural, remote communities. However, it also presents several communication barriers. Examination of the advantages and disadvantages of this system ultimately provides an increased understanding of the broader societal implications of the digitization of medicine.

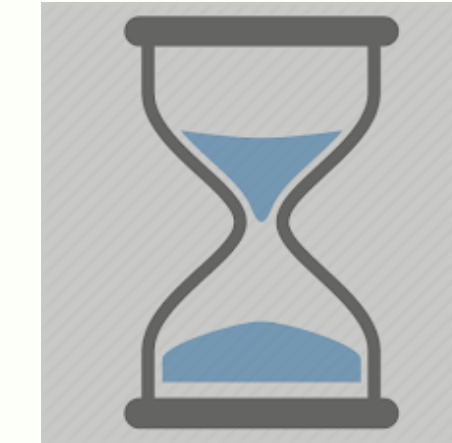
Advantages

The integration of Telemedicine offers several advantages for both patients and healthcare providers. Some of the key benefits include:

- ✓ Elimination of geographic & distance barriers
- ✓ Fewer costs associated with transportation & ER visits
- ✓ Enhanced quality of care
- ✓ Lower wait times coupled with increased flexibility
- ✓ Access to advanced medical equipment and services
- ✓ Improved patient engagement and satisfaction
- ✓ Fosters a more connected healthcare system



<https://www.us-telehealth.com/en/telehealth/>



<http://itblogging.com/2016/04/16/16.html>



<https://www.coofinder.com/2016/05/05/05.html>

Disadvantages

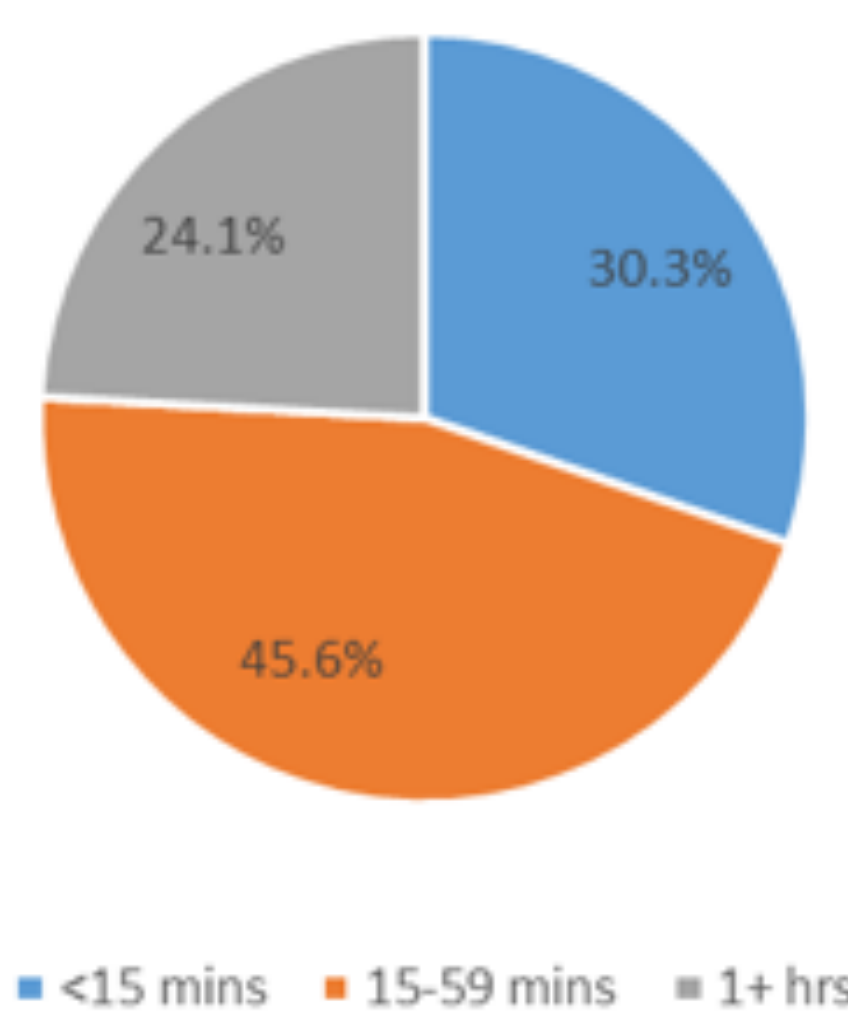
Although there are few of them, disadvantages of the implementation of Telemedicine include the following:

- ✓ Virtual communication results in decreased connectivity between the patient and medical provider
- ✓ Virtual evaluations are more likely to cause misinterpretations and misdiagnosis
- ✓ Emergency care services may not always be possible
- ✓ Communities that lack updated technologies are left out



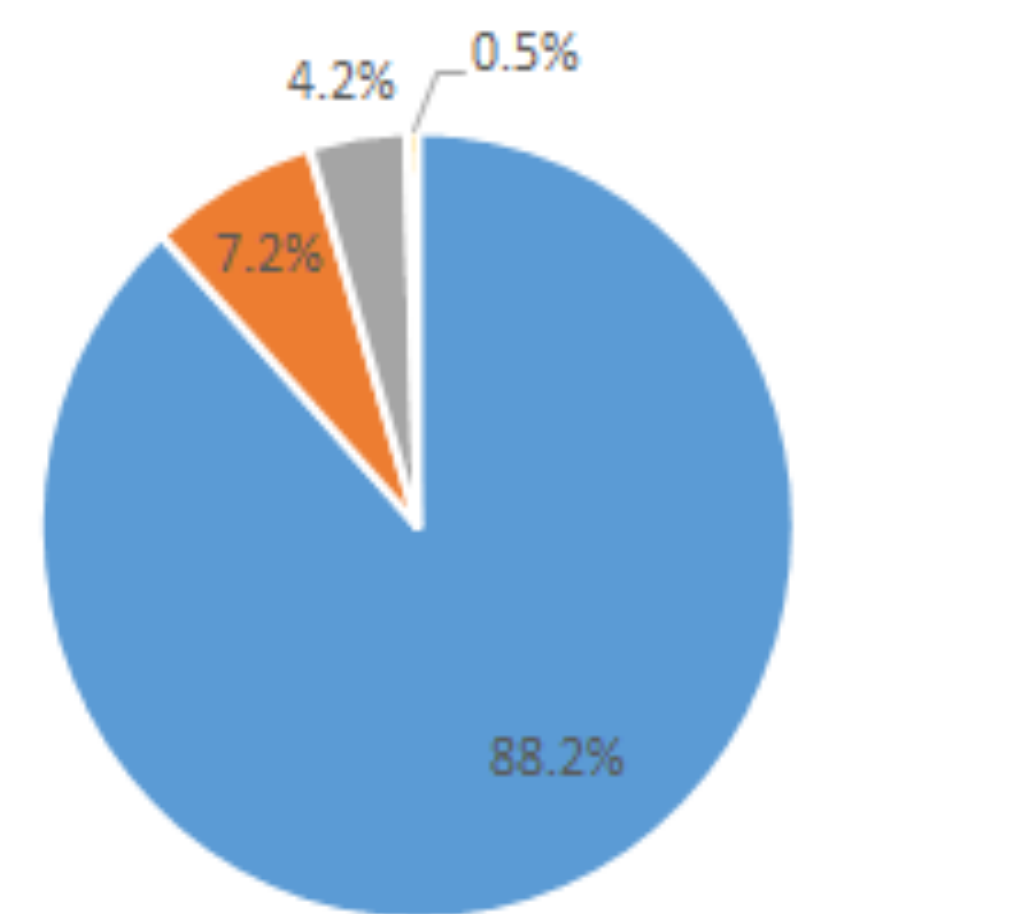
<https://patientengagementmkt.com/news/convenient-telemedicine-access-reduces-travel-healthcare-costs>

Emergency Department Wait Times



https://www.ahrq.gov/about-us/press-releases/2011/01/01_ahrq_ahhs.pdf

RelyMD Wait Times



https://www.ahrq.gov/about-us/press-releases/2011/01/01_ahrq_ahhs.pdf

Conclusions

The implementation of Telemedicine in many areas, particularly rural communities, has revolutionized accessibility to a wide range of healthcare services and enhanced the standard of care patients receive. The benefits of the system greatly outweigh the risks, demonstrating the ways in which technology is positively influencing and shaping the field of medicine in today's growing digital age. However, insight into the disadvantages offers perspective and awareness regarding the limitations of technology and its inability to replace the quality of personal human connection.

References

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