

Virtual care effectively helps treat high blood pressure—but the tech still has major limitations in chronic care treatment

Article

The news: Virtual care company **Included Health** [published](#) new research in peer-reviewed clinical journal Mayo Clinic Proceedings showing that virtual care was highly effective in helping patients control their hypertension (high blood pressure) during the pandemic. The study analyzed the number of video visits and patient-tracked blood pressure (BP) readings of 569 patients.

Here's what the study found:

- Virtual care visits are effective for managing hypertension for over 75% of patients during the pandemic.
- **77% of patients experienced an improvement** in either systolic or diastolic BP.
- **Over half (55.7%) achieved a stable BP of 140/90** by the end of the study period (1 year).

The challenge: While telehealth can fill in the gaps in hypertension care, the general population still has major barriers to accessing the tech.

Virtual visits require a steady internet connection and access to digital devices that enable virtual care:

- **27% of US adults said an ability to use internet or digital tech was a barrier to accessing telehealth services**, and **26% said broadband access was a barrier**, [per](#) BPC's July 2021 survey.

The big takeaway: Telehealth visits can facilitate strong patient engagement and improve management of chronic conditions like hypertension. But in the long run, video visits alone won't be enough for proper treatment.

While clinicians can make lifestyle and medication recommendations virtually, ultimately, video visits will have to be combined with validated remote patient monitoring and in-person check-ins for optimal impact. For example, while doctors can assess a patient's family history and risk factors remotely, virtual care cannot completely supplant a comprehensive physical exam (e.g., using a stethoscope or an EKG to check for heart problems).

What's next? Hypertension is a leading chronic condition in the US. Telehealth solutions, paired with RPM, can help patients better track and manage their condition and lower healthcare costs.

- **Around one-third of US adults have hypertension**—but only half have it under control, per the FDA.
- **And uncontrolled hypertension can lead to heart disease and stroke, which cost the US healthcare system \$214 billion per year.**

Barriers/Obstacles to Accessing Telehealth Service According to US Adults, July 2021

% of respondents



*Note: for doctor's appointments
Source: Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), "Telehealth Visit Use Among U.S. Adults" conducted by SSRS, Aug 1, 2021*

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