

Apple's virtual primary care ambitions are on pause

Article

Apple [reportedly](#) considered launching its own primary care service, which would include health monitoring as part of a subscription program—but employees put a stop to these plans over data integrity concerns, according to The Wall Street Journal.

According to an anonymous Apple employee, Apple mulled providing a healthcare service of its own by leveraging its Apple devices for virtual and in-person care provided by a network

of Apple-employed doctors and its own clinics. The idea was first conceived in 2016, but was put on hold as Apple channeled its focus into its other healthcare efforts (Apple Watch, health records, research)—and it seems won't be fueling it any time soon.

Apple has been living up to its strategy of accelerating its other healthcare initiatives that hinge on its devices/hardware:

- **Apple Watch has more advanced health features than ever before.** It just announced that the next iteration will include new, and highly coveted body temperature and blood glucose sensors. And earlier in September 2020, the [Series 6 Watch](#) featured a new blood oxygen sensor, advanced sleep tracking, and upgraded heart health monitoring. Apple is opening itself up to more remote patient monitoring (RPM) opportunities as the RPM market is blossoms and more consumers purchase smartwatches: [21%](#) of US adults already use a smartwatch—and [we expect](#) there to be more than **30 million RPM users** by 2024, up from 23.4 million in 2020.
- **And it's been developing its Health app to [integrate](#) with electronic health records (EHRs) —and it's already [partnered](#) with multiple health systems.** The Health app is available on all iPhones and securely collects and tracks health data like heart rate, activity levels, lab results, sleeping patterns, and menstrual cycles. This fall, the tech giant is planning to [roll out](#) an update that directly relays this health information to a user's care team. Just this week, the **Mayo Clinic** announced that it's [supporting](#) Apple's Health Records app to boost patient engagement and simplify access to EHRs.

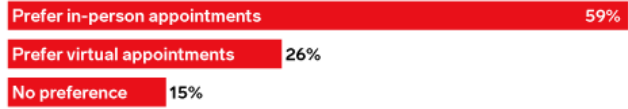
While primary care isn't a top priority, if Apple decides to press the gas, its highly coveted smartwatch and swarm of iPhone users will play to its advantage—if it can sort out its data integrity shortfalls.

- Its Watch, Health app, and Fitness+ service offer consumers a synergistic healthcare experience, all centered on the iPhone's integrated user interface. At the same time, this data could be used to improve the quality of primary care by equipping providers with a seamless connection to patients and their data.
- This marks a golden market opportunity for Apple, considering its healthcare services could tap its **113 million-plus** pool of iPhone users: Nearly half ([47%](#)) of all smartphone users in the US are iPhone users. That means users can easily access their health data on a device they already own, and providers can access more health data collected from Apple's devices to provide better, personalized care.

*Note: We also covered how Apple's stalled primary care ambitions underscore the challenges for Big Tech in healthcare in our **Connectivity & Tech Briefing**.*

US Adults' Attitude Toward Telemedicine* vs. In-Person Appointments for Receiving Healthcare from a Primary Care Physician Post-Coronavirus Pandemic, Sep 2020

% of respondents



Note: n=1,004 ages 18+; assuming the quality and costs are comparable; *medical appointment that is primarily conducted via a smartphone or computer
Source: UnitedHealthcare, "2020 UnitedHealthcare Consumer Sentiment Survey," Oct 29, 2020

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