

Google, Include Health, Pro-Medica team up to deploy virtual physical therapy program

Article

The news: Google is developing a virtual therapy program for healthcare providers with digital musculoskeletal (MSK) care startup **Include Health**—and the duo already scored

ProMedica Health System as their first partner to deploy the tech.

The platform, dubbed MSK-OS, uses AI to track patients' poses and monitor if they're performing physical therapy exercises correctly by calculating their pose measurements via a camera on the patient's computer or cell phone. The platform can then deliver prescriptive care insights that providers can use to guide care.



Why it's worth watching: AI-driven image analysis isn't anything new in the digital musculoskeletal care world, but unlike most virtual physical therapy solutions on the market, Include Health and Google are targeting healthcare providers as customers.

- Other MSK digital health providers like **Hinge Health**, **Omada**, and **Kaia Health**, offer their solutions to employers and health insurers.
- But putting virtual physical therapy into the hands of healthcare providers removes the risk of leaving it up to patients to use their digital therapy consistently enough to see any benefit—which can lead to higher rates of engagement, and ultimately improved health outcomes.

The opportunity: Among specialty care types, physical therapy has some of the lowest rates of telehealth usage currently—but considering the market size of MSK care and the medical

cost burden of chronic pain, it's a space more virtual care companies should consider expanding into.

Just 1% of telemedicine services used by US adults were related to physical therapy, according to Civic Science's February 2021 study.

- For context, primary care (33%), mental health (6%), and dermatology (2%) all have higher telehealth usage rates.

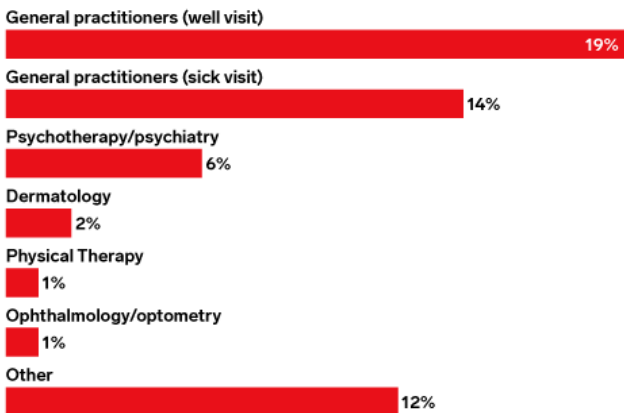
Most virtual physical therapy solutions on the market are being offered by MSK digital therapeutics (DTx) companies, but more telehealth players should leverage their existing patient populations and step into **the virtual physical therapy market—projected to be worth over \$9 billion by 2027**, **per** Fortune Business Insights.

Plus, like mental health appointments, patients have to make physical therapy appointments regularly to experience positive changes in their health—which would create a consistent revenue stream for telehealth companies that decide to move in on the space.

The cost of chronic pain:

- **20%** of US adults experience chronic pain.
- And, chronic pain isn't just prevalent, it's also costly: In fact, it costs the US healthcare system up to **\$635 billion** annually.

Usage of Telemedicine Services According to US Adults, by Type of Medical Appointment, Feb 2021 % of responses



Note: n=3,753 ages 18+

Source: CivicScience as cited in company blog, Feb 15, 2021

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