

MDLive's primary care push captured disengaged patients—but perhaps not for much longer

Article

The news: Cigna-owned telehealth firm **MDLive** [released](#) new data on its virtual primary care program, which first launched in January 2020, and now covers over 15 million members. The data shows how its virtual primary care program was able to capture patients who were otherwise not engaged in primary care:

- **70%** of its preventative care patients said they didn't have a primary care visit in the 24 months prior to enrolling in MDLive's program.
- Less than **25%** of patients reported having a consistent primary care provider.
- And **68%** of patients in the program had at least one chronic disease.

Why it's worth watching: Primary care took a hard hit during the pandemic, and virtual care has done a good job plugging in some holes in provider revenues.

- As of late September 2020, **fewer than one-third** of US primary care practices reported patient volume within **10%** of pre-pandemic levels, [per](#) the Primary Care Collaborative.
- Telehealth-enabled primary care has been helping, and it's even helped to reach new patients due to its convenience, accessibility, and affordability. For example, MDLive's data also reported that **38%** of its virtual primary care visits occurred outside of usual primary care office hours.

The trend: More and more digital health players are gaining traction in the US primary care space on the back of the pandemic:

- In March, primary care startup **Crossover Health** secured **\$168 million** in a funding haul led by the likes of **Amazon** and **LinkedIn**. The company says it can help lower employers' healthcare costs by **15%** via investing upfront in primary care services.
- Primary care startup **Forward Health**, which boasts a flat fee for service and tech-driven personalized care, scored a massive **\$225 million** funding haul in March.
- Digital pharmacy startups [Truepill](#) expanded into virtual primary care in May, and is now operating around **50,000** primary care telehealth visits per week.
- And telehealth giants **Teladoc** and **Amwell** both saw demand for their virtual primary care services skyrocket amid the pandemic, [according to](#) the American Hospital Association.

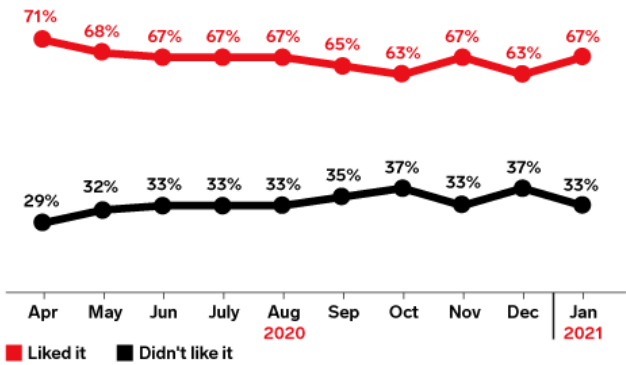
The problem: Beyond the impacts of the pandemic, virtual primary care has the potential to address the growing [shortage](#) of primary care providers and combat [rising](#) healthcare

spending—but virtual primary care alone is not sustainable long-term.

Most consumers say they prefer in-person visits post pandemic, according to a recent Kyruus survey of 1,000 US adults. Moreover, telehealth claims have dropped off as vaccination rates picked up—which means consumers will likely be more inclined to opt for in-person and hybrid care options.

Satisfaction Level with Telemedicine Among US Telemedicine Users, April 2020-Jan 2021

% of responses



Note: n=101,884 ages 18+; April 2020-January 2021 data
Source: CivicScience as cited in company blog, Feb 15, 2021

263749

InsiderIntelligence.com