

ARIZONA TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM



TELEHEALTH: BRIDGING HEALTH EQUITY GAPS OR WIDENING DISPARITIES



PRESENTERS

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DISCLAIMER

The information contained and delivered in this presentation is for educational and informational purposes only and is not legal advice.

DISCLOSURES

Ms. Foote has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Mr. Holcomb's family has a small financial interest in Walgreens stock.

ARIZONA TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the potential benefits of telehealth for promoting health equity
2. Identify challenges associated with ensuring equitable access to telehealth
3. Understand how telehealth addresses barriers to healthcare access

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY #1

- Your participation is encouraged but voluntary
- We intend for your answers to be anonymous
 - In free text response questions avoid sharing identifiable information
- MentiMeter Privacy Policy
<https://www.mentimeter.com/trust/legal/privacy-policy>
- MentiMeter help article on how participants can be identified
<https://help.mentimeter.com/en/articles/410525-how-to-identify-participants>

TELEHEALTH DEFINITIONS

Arizona

(Sec. 3601: Definitions)

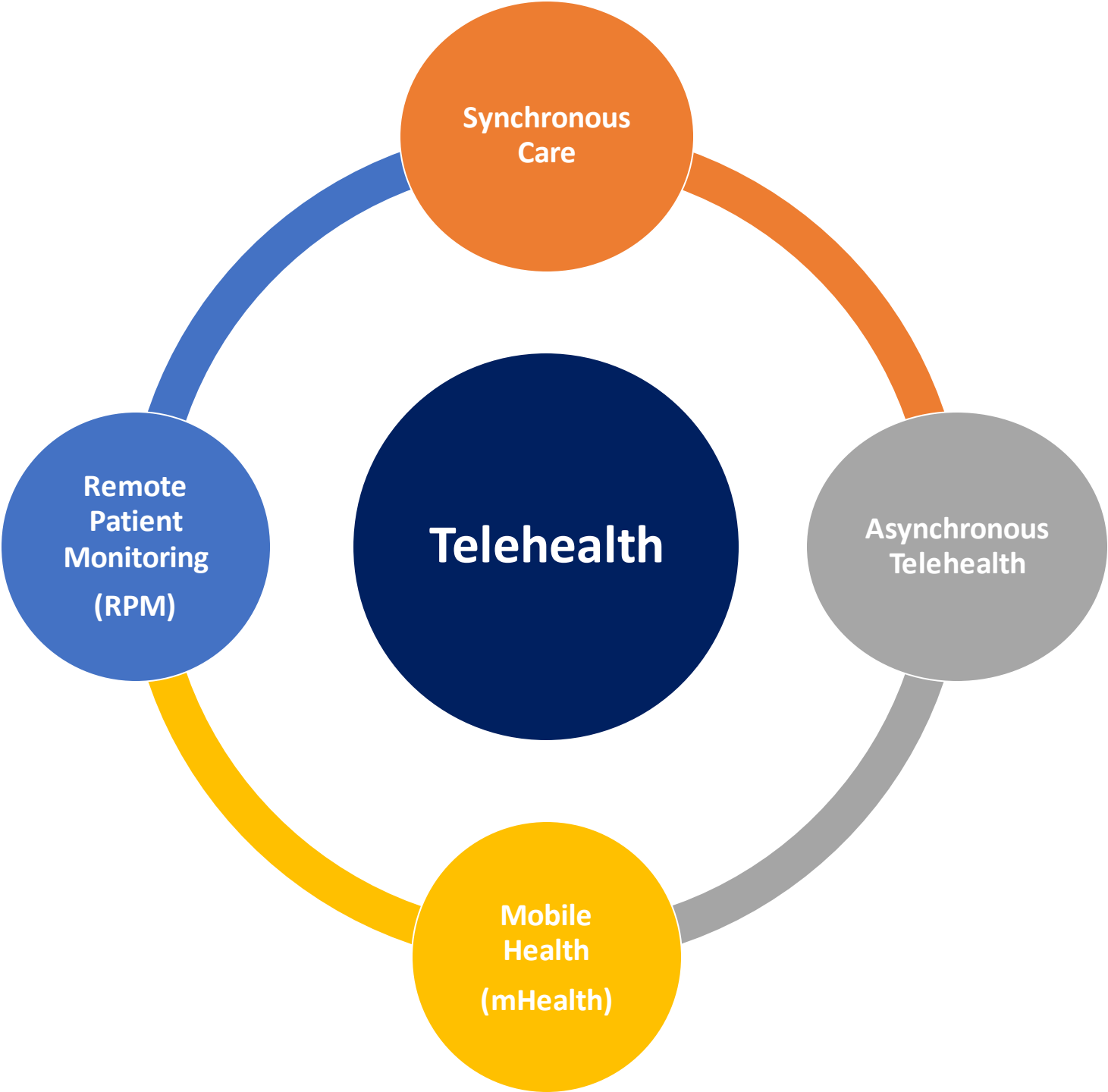
“The interactive use of audio, video, or other electronic media, including asynchronous store-and-forward technologies and remote patient monitoring technologies, for the practice of health care, assessment, diagnosis, consultation or treatment and the transfer of medical data.”

Health Resources & Services Administration’s Office for the Advancement of Telehealth

“Telehealth is defined as the use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to support long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, health administration, and public health.”



TELEHEALTH MODALITIES



TELEHEALTH MODALITIES

Synchronous Care

Live (real-time) interaction between provider and a patient and caregivers

Asynchronous Care

Communication or information shared between providers, patients, and caregivers that occur at different points in time

Mobile Health (MHEALTH)

The use of digital devices to support patient health

Remote Patient Monitoring

The transmission of patient data and clinical information to the provider

GENERAL TELEHEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Most of these can have associated disparities

Service Availability

Broadband Internet Connection

Patient/Caregiver Literacy

Telehealth Compatible Tech

Patient Assistance and/or Accommodations

Funding Sources

Patient Consent

HIPAA

Privacy

TELEHEALTH'S GROWING ROLE IN HEALTHCARE



Promoting health equity by addressing various barriers to healthcare access



Dismantling geographical constraints



Eliminating transportation obstacles



Promoting ongoing care for chronic conditions and providing access to specialists

TELEHEALTH FOR HEALTH EQUITY: POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Increased Access For
Underserved
Populations

Addresses Healthcare
Professional Shortages

Addresses Healthcare
Deserts

Improved Chronic
Disease Management

Care Beyond Walls and Wires: Northern Arizona Healthcare



Health Services Advisory Group, Inc.

914 subscribers



CHALLENGES TO EQUITABLE TELEHEALTH ACCESS

Digital Equity is a Super Social Determinant of Health

- Digital Divide
 - Language & Cultural Barriers
 - Digital & Health Literacy
 - Differential Adoption Rates
 - Technology Comfort Level
 - Lack of Private Space
 - Lack of Accommodations for Peoples' Disabilities
 - Telehealth as the Sole Access Point
 - Economic Barriers
 - Policy Barriers
 - Lack of Continuity of Care
-
- 

WHO IS USING TELEHEALTH?

**National Survey Trends in Telehealth Use in 2021:
 Disparities in Utilization and Audio vs. Video Services**

Table 1. Rates of Telehealth Use and Audio vs. Video Modality, by Demographic Group, 2021

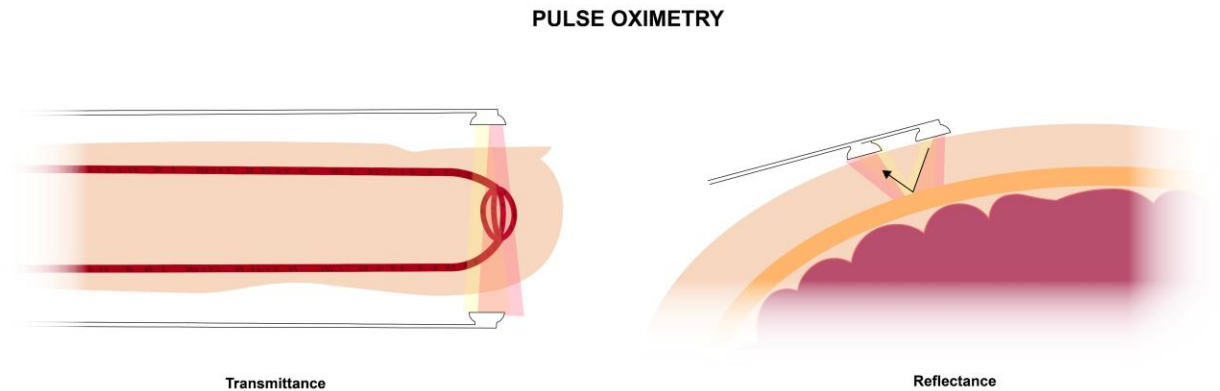
	Full study period (April 14th - October 11th, 2021) % with a Telehealth Visit in the Previous 4 Weeks	Second Half of the Study Period (July 21st to October 11th, 2021)		
		% with a Telehealth Visit in the Previous 4 Weeks	% of Telehealth Visits by Video	% of Telehealth Visits by Audio
Race and Ethnicity				
Latino	24.4	21.8	50.7	49.3
White alone, not Latino	21.1	19.0	61.9	38.1
Black alone, not Latino	26.8	24.7	53.6	46.4
Asian alone, not Latino	22.2	20.2	51.3	48.7
Multiracial or Other	26.2	23.5	58.9	41.2
Census Region				
Northeast	23.7	21.3	59.5	40.5
Midwest	19.0	16.8	58.4	41.6
West	25.6	23.7	55.6	44.4
South	21.8	19.5	59.5	40.5
Education				
Less than high school	24.1	22.4	38.1	61.9
High school or GED	21.1	18.9	48.2	51.8
Some college/associate's degree	23.3	20.9	58.9	41.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	23.0	20.8	67.4	32.6
Household Income				
Less than \$25,000	26.7	24.3	48.7	51.3
\$25,000 - \$34,999	24.3	21.4	49.7	50.3
\$35,000 - \$49,999	22.6	20.3	54.7	45.3
\$50,000 - \$74,999	21.4	19.0	58.7	41.3
\$75,000 - \$99,999	21.0	19.2	62.9	37.1
≥ \$100,000	20.9	18.7	68.8	31.2
Age				
18-24 years	17.6	16.0	72.5	27.5
25-39 years	20.7	18.6	69.3	30.7
40-54 years	22.7	20.9	60.9	39.1
55-64 years	23.6	21.1	52.1	47.9
> 65 years	24.6	22.0	43.5	56.5
Insurance				
Medicare	27.4	24.7	48.1	51.9
Medicaid	29.3	26.3	54.5	45.5
Private	20.7	18.6	65.9	34.1
Other Health Insurance	25.0	22.4	51.7	48.3
Uninsured	9.4	8.5	48.8	51.2

POPULATION GROUPS DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED BY THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

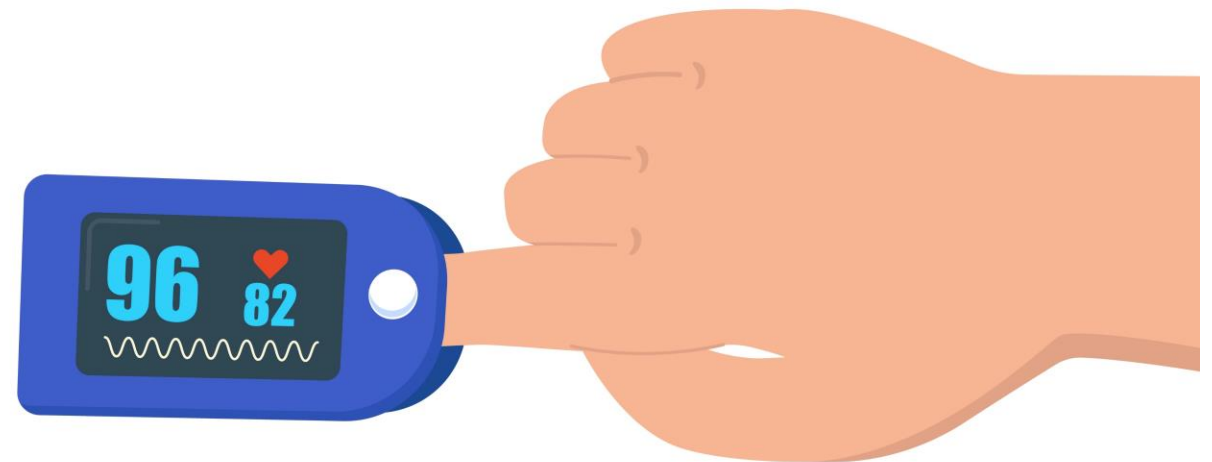
1. Older Adults
2. Racial and ethnic minority groups
3. Disability
4. Low socioeconomic status
5. Living in rural areas
6. Limited English proficiency
7. University of Houston College of Medicine study*

SOME TECHNOLOGIES MAY HAVE INHERENT BIASES

- Pulse oximeters
- Infrared thermometers
- Bilirubinometer
- Dermoscopes
- Near-infrared spectroscopy
- AI clinical decision support algorithms
- Non-diverse data sets



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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: SOLUTIONS FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS



Provider Education

Leads to patient empowerment



Patient Readiness

Technology surveys are useful for assessing patient readiness for telehealth services.



Infrastructure Expansion

Prioritizing broadband infrastructure expansion in rural areas is crucial for overcoming connectivity barriers.



Digital Health Literacy

Training programs, especially targeted at marginalized populations, play a vital role in enhancing telehealth utilization.



Telehealth Access Points

TAPs serve as physical locations where individuals can access telehealth services.



Telehealth In Libraries

Have 2 key elements for launching telehealth: public trust and a strong privacy commitment.



Partnerships & Leadership

Collaborative efforts between healthcare providers, community organizations, and government agencies.



Evidence-Based Solutions

Implementing proven strategies to address health disparities and promote equity.

ADDRESSING LANGUAGE & CULTURAL CONCERNS IN TELEHEALTH

Certified Medical Translators

Improves communication with patients who have limited English proficiency.

Educational Resources

Tailored educational resources help providers navigate cultural differences in telehealth.

Accessibility: Visually Impaired

Telehealth platforms should accommodate blind or visually impaired patients for full participation.

Accessibility: Deaf Individuals

Telehealth services must be accessible to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

PROMOTING TELEHEALTH ADOPTION

Community Based

- Community Health Workers / Community Health Representatives / Promotores
- Digital Health Navigators
- Community Outreach Programs

Patient Based

- Patient testimonials
- Patient success stories

Collaboration

- Local healthcare providers
- Healthcare organizations
- First responders



**OCR NON-
DISCRIMINATION
POLICY:
TELEHEALTH AND
AI**

**OCR's 2024 Update of
Section 1557 Rule**

“Notably, this updated rule recognizes the growing importance of telehealth and patient care decision support tools in the health care marketplace —including artificial intelligence and machine learning— and applies nondiscrimination protections to the use of these technologies.”

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CALL TO ACTION!

Encourage collaboration among stakeholders to leverage telehealth for equitable rural healthcare. Collaboration can break barriers, share resources, advocate policy change, promote education, and enhance healthcare access for rural residents.



LINKS & RESOURCES

- [Arizona's Broadband Equity, Access, & Deployment Program](#)
- [Community Health Workers are vital to Arizona's healthcare equity, workforce and communities \(telemedicine.arizona.edu\) | Arizona Telemedicine Program](#)
- [Connect Arizona](#)
- [Digital Health Literacy Playbook for Rural Communities](#)
- [Digital Health Navigators | Southwest Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- [Find Telehealth Map](#)
- [Health Equity Resources | Southwest Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- [HHS Health Equity in Telehealth](#)
- [HHS final nondiscrimination rule includes telehealth, AI \(fiercehealthcare.com\)](#)
 - <https://www.nmhealthcouncils.org/equity-toolkit>
- [Library Telehealth Resources | Southwest Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- [National Home Test to Treat Program | ATP](#)
- [Net Inclusion 2025 – Gila River, AZ <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/net-inclusion-2024/>](#)
- [New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils Health Equity Committee Toolkit: Stages of Development for County and Tribal Health Councils](#)
- [Patient Empowerment](#)
- [Policy Relating to Telehealth Equity & Disparities | OCR Section 1557](#)
- [Provider Education](#)
- [Telehealth & Language Access](#)
 - [Telehealth 101: What Libraries Need to Know \(June 10 – July 28\)](#)
- [Telehealth Access Points](#)
- [Telehealth Fact Sheets | Southwest Telehealth Resource Center](#)
- [Telehealth Guidance and Resources: Communication Access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Patients and their Providers](#)
- [Types of Telehealth](#)

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THANK YOU!

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