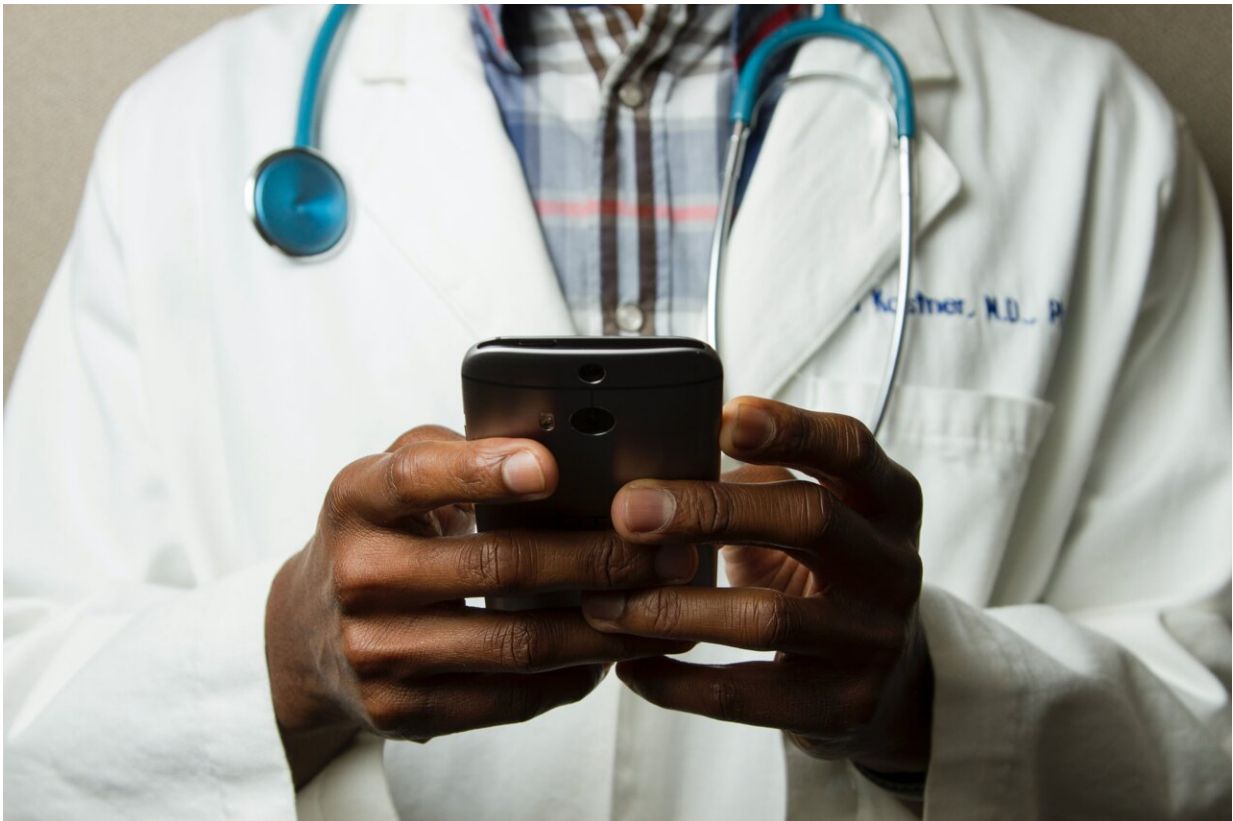


# The importance of telehealth for Medicare beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A new study published in the *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* describes the use of telehealth among Medicare beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights its importance for providing care.

When patients and physicians were separated due to public health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicare temporarily implemented payment policies for telehealth services on an emergency basis. Survey responses from 9,686 Medicare beneficiaries in the fall of 2020 indicated that more than half (58.3%) of primary care providers provided telehealth services, while only 26%–28% of specialists did. Overall, 38.3% of beneficiaries reported that they used either video or voice calls with their physicians, and only 7.6% reported that they were unable to get care because of COVID-19.

The findings indicate that telehealth provided important access to care in an uncertain, pandemic environment.

"We were surprised that our research found that so many [primary care physicians](#) offered telehealth services and how a change in Medicare reimbursement policy may have accelerated the use of telehealth services," said lead author Hanadi Y. Hamadi, Ph.D., of the University of North Florida.

**More information:** Hanadi Y. Hamadi et al, Medicare and telehealth: The impact of COVID -19 pandemic, *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/jep.13634](https://doi.org/10.1111/jep.13634)

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