

Californians With HIV Satisfied With Telehealth During Pandemic Peak

Clients with HIV were highly satisfied with telemedicine visits and wanted to use the format in the future.

January 9, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

After experiencing the effectiveness and convenience of telemedicine during the height of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), people living with [HIV](#) in Los Angeles reported that they would continue to use the option in the future, according to a new study [published in BMC Infectious Diseases](#).

In recent years, telemedicine has transformed health care by expanding [access to care](#). Telemedicine refers to the use of technology, such as cell phones and video conferences, to evaluate, diagnose and treat patients remotely. It is a good alternative for in-person follow-up visits in which the main goal is to check in about how you are doing.

[Telemedicine](#) became increasingly popular during the pandemic, when many people were unable or felt unsafe going to the doctor in person. This was especially true for people with compromised immune systems, including those living with HIV, who are more vulnerable to other illnesses.

To evaluate the impact of telemedicine among people living with HIV during the pandemic, the study focused on two federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) in LA. Reported telemedicine visits began in March 2020, according to the [American Journal of Managed Care](#).

All 271 participants involved were 18 years or older and had received HIV care for at least three months in LA-based FQHCs. Most participants (79%) identified as cisgender men, almost half (46%) identified as Black and 26% identified as Latino.

About 56% of participants used a telephone telemedicine visit and 4% used video.

When asked about quality of care during these visits, 95% were satisfied with telephone visits, and

100% were satisfied with video visits.

About 70% felt that telemedicine was more convenient compared with in-person visits. What's more, a majority of participants thought that telemedicine could or would save them time (86%) and money (79%).

The convenience of telemedicine could also lead to fewer missed appointments. Indeed, about 61% of participants said they were less likely to miss an appointment if telemedicine was an option.

"Respondents expressed high interest in using telemedicine for future HIV care, including video visits," [the study authors wrote](#). "While individuals raised concerns about certain challenges with telemedicine...they found that telemedicine made it easier to make their appointments on time and saved them time and money."

Although most participants had consistent access to privacy, those without privacy cited this as a barrier to the use of telemedicine. Others said they would feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics in person rather than over the telephone.

"Future studies should explore barriers to implementing video telemedicine in FQHCs and determine telemedicine's impact on clinical outcomes, including engagement and viral suppression," authors concluded.

In related news, facilitated telemedicine within opioid treatment programs helped more people with [hepatitis C](#) achieve a cure, limited reinfections and promoted drug use discontinuation, according to [study findings published in JAMA](#).

"Facilitated telemedicine integrated into opioid treatment programs resulted in significantly higher cure rates, with significant reductions in illicit drug use and minimal reinfections," the study authors wrote. "Facilitated telemedicine increases hepatitis C treatment access for underserved populations."

To read more, click [#Telemedicine](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[For People With Severe Long COVID, Medical Care Is Out of Reach](#)," "[Telehealth Services and Medications for Opioid Use Disorder Reduced Overdose Risk](#)" and "[End of Internet Subsidies for Low-Income Households Threatens Telehealth Access](#)."

