AdvancedMD

Telehealth:
The Ultimate Guide to
MAXIMIZING REVENUE,
KEEPING MORE OF WHAT YOU'RE PAID, **&**
Thriving Through **Thick** *& Thin*

COVID-19 Special Edition

Once viewed as a potential home health technology "for the future," telehealth (medicine) is now blazing into mainstream medicine with surprising speed, high adoption and tremendous satisfaction for both doctors and patients.

Early on, it was employed as a cost-effective way of addressing the growing shortfall of primary care physicians. Forecasts for 2015-2020 predicted a shortfall of 14,900-35,600 physicians. Recently updated projections predict that gap to widen to between 21,100 and 55,200 physicians by 2023 . Telehealth will necessarily play an increasingly important role in closing that gap by extending physician reach and time utilization without compromising quality of care.

Equally important, early-adopter physicians are discovering the powerful leverage telehealth gives them in attracting and retaining new patients and maintaining business (and revenue) continuity in times of uncertainty or temporary/seasonal dips in demand.

The novel COVID-19 crisis is a prime case in point. While stay-at-home and social distancing regulations temporarily curtailed in-office visits — with encounters down by 50 percent for many practices — forward-thinking physicians used telehealth to continue seeing patients for many different visit types, keeping both continuity of care and revenue flowing. Reimbursements are on par with in-office visits through CMS and Medicaid programs as well as a large and expanding number of private carriers.

This is a must-read if you are considering adding telehealth in your practice and you need to better understand the benefits, billing requirements and implementation processes involved. We share crucial information on:

1. How to thrive now and in the future using telehealth to maintain continuity and grow your practice by tapping into double-digit growth trends.
2. How to maximize telehealth reimbursements, including a handy reference guide for many of the available telehealth HCPCS Level II and CPT Codes.
3. How to keep more of what you are paid by reducing costs and improving efficiencies. Included is a 5-point checklist with detailed recommendations for best-practice implementation.

We've condensed hundreds of pages of industry data — including current trends — into our most concise overview on managing telehealth.

What You'll find inside

Market growth projection

COVID-19-specific telehealth impacts

Billing and coding tips

A handy reference guide for many available telehealth HCPCS Level II and CPT Codes

A 5-point implementation checklist with step-by-step recommendations

Technology and implementation recommendations

TELEHEALTH USE AND GROWTH ARE EXPLODING

Regardless of what you want to call it, telehealth is driven by multiple demand forces with a double-digit growth trajectory expected to reach between 46 and 81 million patient visits by 2023 and $64 billion in value by 2025.

Ramping up your telehealth capabilities now helps ensure that you thrive and grow in virtually any future practice scenario.

CMS refers to telemedicine or telehealth as the vehicle to deliver medicine or care by distant-site practitioners – or hands-off medicine.

This reflects the continuation of more than 18 percent annual growth experienced in the past five years – truly unprecedented expansion.

Early growth spurred by physician shortage gap-filling demand is now being bolstered by the growing trend of patients becoming more proactive in their healthcare delivery choices and demanding greater speed, flexibility, and convenience. Cost savings and value-based care also continue as drivers, benefiting patients, medical plans and providers through more economical service delivery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has in many ways accelerated the move to telehealth by focusing the entire industry on removing barriers, even if temporarily, to making this type of health care delivery easily accessible and reimbursable to a broad swath of providers, plans and patients. Virtually every major insurance carrier has added COVID-19-related telehealth reimbursement to their plans. While post-crisis adjustments to plans and coverage may occur, the progress toward technology adoption, reimbursement and cultural acceptance will remain.

Bottom line

Telehealth is here to stay and will become a major part of how you treat patients in the future. Ramping up your telehealth capabilities now with a variety of at-home care technologies will ensure that you thrive in today's often unpredictable, everchanging healthcare delivery environment.

HOW TO THRIVE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE USING TELEHEALTH

In times of uncertainty and change, having multiple options and the ability to flexibly execute them can spell the difference between thriving, and merely surviving...or worse.

Tapping into telehealth now puts you in the driver's seat to capture growth at its height, stay ahead of leading trends driving patient preference, and quickly adapt to opportunities potentially hidden in changes or disruptions on the road ahead. You'll be able to retain existing patients and attract new patients, creating a nice boon to your revenue.

Now more than ever, having sound options for continuing to deliver your services in the face of change ensures your practice's continuity and ability to thrive under any circumstance. An entire suite of intuitive at-home care technologies added to your practice offerings can help you raise the service delivery bar during good times and provide stability during unexpected events.

The COVID-19 crisis has crystalized the powerful effect of options and flexibility on the continuity of a practice. Whereas many practices were forced to essentially close their doors and scale back staff, those with telehealth capability had much greater flexibility in continuing to provide many valuable services to patients and keep reimbursements flowing.

HOW TO MAXIMIZE TELEHEALTH REIMBURSEMENTS

Simplifying telehealth coding helps in maximizing reimbursement.

Using the correct CPT code or modifier does not always equate to an accepted claim by the payor. Each payor has its own rules and requirements and the payor determines what services are covered.

The following table contains a sample of current telehealth HCPCS Level II and CPT codes. This CPT code set is maintained by the CPT Editorial Panel, an independent, multi-stakeholder body appointed by the American Medical Association (AMA).

The following table contains a sample of current telemedicine HCPCS Level II and CPT codes. This CPT code set is maintained by the CPT Editorial Panel, an independent, multi-stakeholder body appointed by the American Medical Association (AMA).[4]

SERVICE	HCPCS LEVEL II	CPT
Office or other outpatient visits		99201-99215
Annual Wellness Visit – first & subsequent visit	G0438-G0439	
Telehealth consultations, emergency department or initial inpatient	G0425-G0427	
Follow up hospital care services		99231-99233
Follow up nursing facility care services		99307-99310
Transitional care management		99495-99496
Kidney disease education services	G0420-G0421	
Diabetes self-management training services	G0108-G0109	
Individual psychotherapy		90832-90838
Family psychotherapy – with or without the patient present		90846-90847
Annual depression screening	G0444	
Annual alcohol misuse screening	G0442	

This sample of HCPCS Level II and CPT codes gives insight into the types of screening, management, and education services that have codes for delivery via telemedicine.

For a complete list of Medicare-approved telehealth services, see the Medicare Learning Network Booklet: Telehealth Services booklet pgs. 7-10.[5]

State-by-state Telehealth Changes and Laws

For the latest telehealth changes for your state, check out the National Telehealth Policy Resource Center.[6]

CMS Alert! March 6, 2020
Medicare Beneficiaries Expanded Telehealth Benefits During COVID-19 Outbreak

Under the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act and Section 1135 waiver authority, the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) broadened access to Medicare telehealth services, so beneficiaries can get a wider range of services from their doctors and other clinicians without traveling to a health care facility. On March 6, 2020, Medicare began temporarily paying clinicians to furnish beneficiary telehealth services residing across the entire country.

CMS outlines how to code & submit telehealth claims.

Per CMS, submit claims for telehealth services using the appropriate CPT or HCPCS code for the professional service along with the telehealth modifier 95 (Modifier GT for Institutional) via interactive audio and video telehealth.

By coding and billing the GT modifier with a covered telehealth procedure code, you are certifying that the beneficiary was present at an eligible originating site when you furnished the telehealth service. By coding and billing the GT modifier with a covered ESRD-related service telehealth code, you are certifying that you furnished one "hands on" visit per month to examine the vascular access site.

Place of Service 11*

Physicians should submit their usual place-of-service code to indicate what it would have been had the service been furnished in-person. *11 indicates an office-based physician.

Commercial payors are also using these modifiers for the services that are covered. Check with each payor to determine which codes and modifiers to use.

Modifier 95

Synchronous Telemedicine Service Rendered Via a Real-Time Interactive Audio and Video Telecommunications System. This is the current modifier for 2020. See Appendix P of the CPT code set for a complete list of codes that this modifier can be used with.

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated adoption of telehealth acceptance by major commercial insurance carriers. Within several weeks of the onset of strict social distancing and stay-at-home restrictions, virtually all major commercial carriers announced telehealth options for their members and providers, guaranteeing equal reimbursement as in-office visits. While some programs were introduced on a limited time basis, the infrastructure and expectations are in place for future use.

Common carriers are accelerating their acceptance of telehealth options.

Rising healthcare costs, government-mandated access to healthcare, patient demand and a shortage of healthcare providers are driving demand for telehealth. As a result, current trends suggest that virtual home visits will be routine in a few short years.

CMS and state Medicaid programs have led the way in providing clear reimbursement guidelines for telehealth visits. This has been bolstered by legislation now enacted in nearly 60 percent of states that mandates equal compensation for telehealth visits and equivalent in-office interactions.

This, combined with patient and provider demand pressure, is providing the impetus for commercial carriers to get on board with telehealth options for their plan members and reimbursement for providers. As telehealth growth continues and the benefits and cost savings become clearer, this trend will only accelerate.

HOW TO KEEP MORE OF WHAT YOU ARE PAID

Committing to a telehealth solution and working through the reimbursement requirements are the first key steps toward jumping into the telehealth pool. While maximizing reimbursement for your work is critical, keeping more of what you are paid is equally important.

Keeping more of what you are paid depends primarily on two factors: Best practices implementation, to ensure a smooth, efficient and complete launch of your service; and the right platform that can deliver cost-efficient workflow and service delivery.

Our 5-point checklist will get you started right. Based on hands-on experience with many practices nationwide, it provides detailed pointers on best practices for telehealth first timers.

The AdvancedMD telehealth solution is part of our robust @home suite, a fully integrated cloud platform unified within our practice management to help minimize cost and boost productivity.

5-POINT CHECKLIST TO ENSURE A BETTER, SMOOTHER IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS.

1. Plan your telehealth strategy. Determine how you are going to use telehealth in your practice. For example, are you trying to improve the patient experience by offering after hours or weekend visits? Are you seeking to improve continuity of care with chronic and elderly patients? Are you trying to attract and retain physician employees? Whether your goals are focused on patient outcomes or financial improvement, telehealth can help. You need to understand how.

2. Appoint a telehealth champion in your practice. This person is an advocate for the success of your telehealth initiative. His or her role should promote the benefits of your telehealth strategy to your staff. This person should be part of the technology evaluation and selection process, workflow integration, and training and coaching staff.

3. Market the benefit of telehealth to your patients. This won't be hard, but requires a bit of setup to create a flawless patient experience. Your champion should help with patient support and education. Appointment reminders should be automated and properly triggered to help reduce no-show rates. Utilizing email and text patient messaging services to create awareness of your telehealth option is mutually beneficial and can help fill empty timeslots.

4. Practice conducting a telehealth visit both as a provider and patient. Being on camera can take some practice. Be awareness of ambient noise, your stage (what's behind you) and your body language. Be sure to practice with staff and friends before going live with patients.

5. Meet all state licensing requirements. Telehealth makes it possible for providers to connect with patients in other states. When this happens, the originating site (the location of the patient) is considered the "place of service", and therefore the distant site provider must adhere to the licensing rules and regulations of the state in which the patient is located. Each state has their own laws and regulations around licensing which are typically enforced by the state medical board.[9]

The Right Platform for Telehealth Delivery

Integration at the software level is key to your success with telehealth. The best telehealth systems act like a virtual clinic where you have cloud access to all your patient health information, medication histories and demographics.

One-click video call access from the schedule and transparent charting, orders and billing of all telehealth encounters erases the workflow line between live and tele-visit encounters. Integration through the cloud is like having a complete virtual practice. All you need is a computer with a webcam and an internet connection.

Provide patient care from anywhere with an entire suite of AdvancedMD @home options. You can create a robust and scalable business continuity plan to treat patients when and where they need you. Our cloud patient engagement suite is the perfect platform for managing high patient volume with reduced effort and resources.

Telehealth lets you manage prescriptions and refill requests without requiring the patient to leave their home.

Electronic prescribing provides a fast, paperless way to handle prescription and refill requests without requiring the patient to leave home.

An **online patient portal** gives patients a centralized hub for patient education, scheduling, bill-pay, messaging and countless other tasks to reduce time for them and you.

New and existing patients can **self-schedule an appointment** on your patient portal based on your availability.

Online intake and consent forms take the "wait" out of waiting room and help you capture accurate information that flows automatically into the chart.

Automated appointment reminders are sent automatically via email, text or phone in English or Spanish.

Messaging gives patients direct access to your front desk and clinical staff in a secure environment.

Summary

The healthcare delivery landscape continues to be molded by fast-moving, often unpredictable forces. But regardless of the ultimate configuration, telehealth will play a key role in your ability to profitably deliver quality care to patients.

Getting started now positions you to take advantage of the high growth and increased revenue opportunities that will be available in the next 5-10 years. And a firm telehealth foundation is one of your best assurances of stability and continuity in your practice for many years to come.

AdvancedMD offers every feature and capability outlined in this eBook.

To learn more, schedule a demo.

[1] Extracted April 21, 2020. https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-findings-confirm-predictions-physician-shortage
[2] Extracted April 21, 2020. https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/Downloads/TelehealthSrvcsfctsht.pdf
[3] Extracted April 21, 2020. https://www.statista.com/statistics/820756/number-of-telehealth-visits-in-us/
[4] Extracted April 21, 2020. https://www.globaltrademag.com/u-s-telehealth-market-trends-size-share-and-growth-until-2025/
[5] Extracted April 22, 2020. https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Medicare-Learning-Network-MLN/MLNProducts/Downloads/TelehealthSrvcsfctsht.pdf
[6] Extracted April 22, 2020. https://www.cchpca.org/telehealth-policy/current-state-laws-and-reimbursement-policies
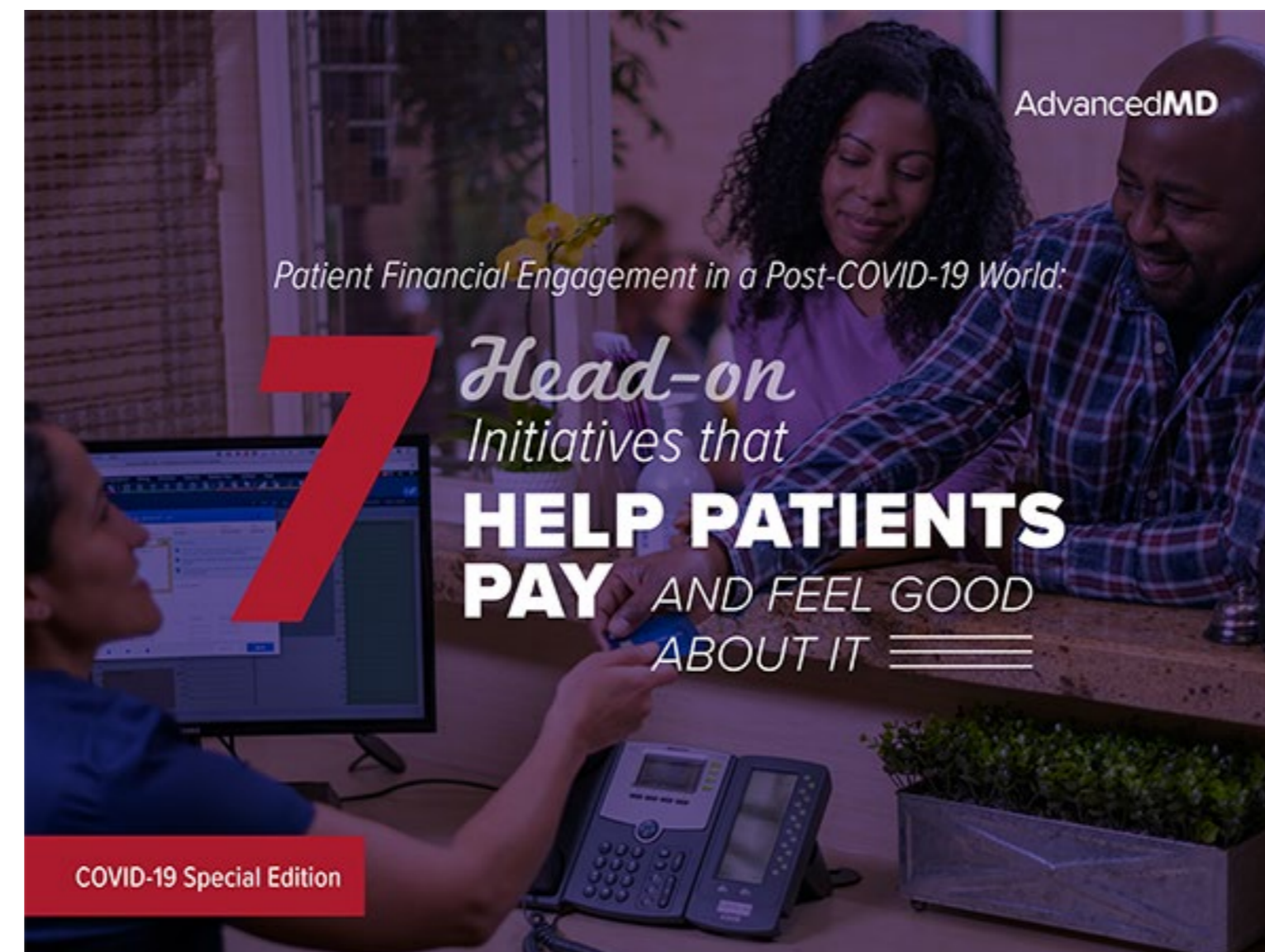[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid
[9] Extracted April 21, 2020. http://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/toolbox-module/cross-state-licensure

Check out the other eBooks in our COVID-19 Special Edition series:

7 Crucial Steps to Reboot Your Practice

Patient Financial Engagement in a Post-COVID-19 World

Hitchhikers Guide to Managing a Sustainable Patient Mix

Post-COVID-19: Moving to 'Better than Normal'

The Human Siide of Telehealth

Our exclusive COVID-19 series of eBooks provides a foundation on how to reboot your practice following this crisis. Download these free eBooks to learn more.

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