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COVID-19 Pandemic Study: How Telehealth Reduced No Shows & Boosted Patient Satisfaction

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& Boosted Patient Satisfaction

Patient no-shows have been an ongoing problem for medical providers for several decades. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, no-show rates across the U.S. healthcare system ranged from 5% to 50%.[1] After the start of the pandemic, no-show percentages soared as patients stayed home. Previously, the main reasons for missing appointments included financial barriers, employment and childcare conflicts,[2] transportation logistics, emotional challenges, or simple forgetfulness.

The patient no-show issue has significant adverse consequences for both providers and patients.

Provider Impacts	Patient Impacts When patients miss medical appointments, they also experience adverse results, including:
Wasted appointment slots	Lack of essential medical care, including routine screenings
Loss of appointment revenue	Lack of essential medical care, including routine screenings
Unused staffing expenses	An attrition rate of 70% compared with 19% for patients who attended appointments
Lower patient attendance	Disruption of ongoing care, medication oversight, and medication adjustments
Unsatisfactory patient health	

Statistics show that missed appointments in a 10-provider practice add up to over $850,000 in lost revenue annually. That comprises a $150 billion loss in healthcare revenue each year.
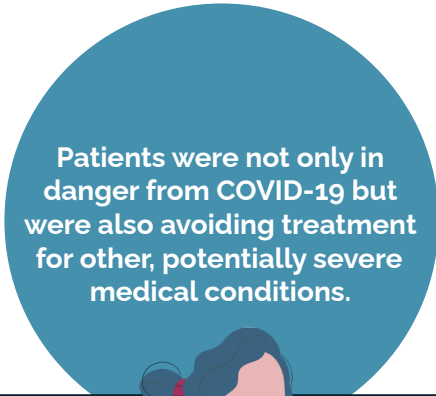
Ultimately, patients who did not show up for one or more appointments were less likely to return over the next 18 months. This evidence shows missing medical appointments can be damaging to patients' health.[3]
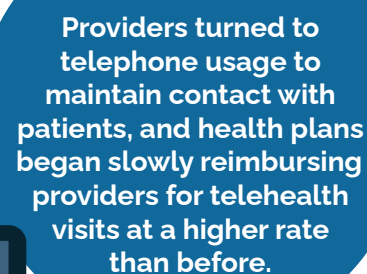
The Pandemic Shift to Telehealth

Once the pandemic struck, many people missed their scheduled medical appointments out of fear of contagion or concerns over exposure to the coronavirus. Some were forced to cancel or forfeit appointments due to lockdown requirements. Other factors affecting scheduled appointments were:

Healthcare institutions reduced their availability for in-patient visits as staff stayed home, either because they contracted COVID-19 or in response to government restrictions.

Patients were not only in danger from COVID-19 but were also avoiding treatment for other, potentially severe medical conditions.

Providers turned to telephone usage to maintain contact with patients, and health plans began slowly reimbursing providers for telehealth visits at a higher rate than before.
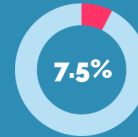
🚀 Telehealth's Surging Popularity

Before the pandemic, telehealth enjoyed limited uptake, but its popularity surged as providers pivoted rapidly to find new ways to consult with their patients. By April 2020, overall utilization for office visits and outpatient care rose 78 times higher than two months earlier. Utilization leveled out afterward, but research by McKinsey[4] shows that by July 2021, telehealth consumption had stabilized at 38 times higher than before the pandemic.

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Reduced Number of No-Shows

This shift substantially reduced patient no-shows because many of the common obstacles to in-person attendance no longer existed. In the pandemic context, telehealth became a positive and sustainable way to educate, prevent, and treat COVID-19 in patients who did not require hospitalization. It bridged the gap between patients, providers, and health systems, enabling everyone to communicate virtually while limiting the spread of the virus.

Real-world evidence gathered during the pandemic bears witness to this fact. For example, a December 2021 study shows a telehealth no-show rate of 7.5% during the pandemic. This compares well against the 36.1% no-show rate for office visits during the pandemic and the 29.8% pre-pandemic no-show rate for office visits.[5]

7.5% — **Telehealth visits' no-show rate during the pandemic**

36% — **Office visits no-show rate during the pandemic**

29% — **Office visits no-show rate before the pandemic**

Enhanced Patient Satisfaction

 Patients have always benefited from telehealth, according to a 2017 review of 44 articles that showed telemedicine delivered a 61% increase in patient satisfaction.[6] Reasons for this increase included improved outcomes (mentioned in 55% of the studies), convenience, reduced caregiver burden, and lower travel costs.

A study of patient satisfaction based on 341 medical consultations, of which 155 were in-office visits and 186 were telehealth consultations, occurred over six weeks in early 2020. Results showed those who participated in the telehealth visits responded similarly to seven of the nine satisfaction metrics compared with patients who attended in-person visits. From a provider's perspective, telehealth also helped reduce the demand for personal protective equipment and minimize the COVID-19 risk to medical staff.

Researchers could find no notable differences in overall patient satisfaction between those who used video conferencing vs. telephone format. The issue identified most often from the responses was the need to improve technology, such as establishing better internet connections and video quality.

Increased Medical Reimbursement

Prior to the pandemic, providers were reimbursed significantly less for telehealth consultations than for in-person visits. This fact caused many practitioners to delay implementing the service. However, when the COVID-19 national emergency was declared on March 13, 2020, it allowed Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to implement the 1135 Waiver.

This waiver effectively set aside a range of healthcare requirements, including the conditions of participation.[7] The move paved the way for increased reimbursement by federal agencies and private insurance companies alike, making the practice of telehealth a real option for providers in multiple healthcare fields.

The Pandemic Shift to Telehealth

The pandemic catalyzed the rise of telehealth and its establishment as an accepted healthcare delivery method. As COVID-19 wanes and life returns to normal, the medium shows some signs of slowing.[8] Virtual visits have stabilized at around 10% of all healthcare consultations, which is still substantially higher than pre-pandemic levels. Telehealth is here to stay for reasons that include:

- Patients have become accustomed to the convenience of having primary and specialist care visits in the comfort of their own home, regardless of their location, and are unlikely to want to revert to traditional visits.

- Health plans are increasing their acceptance of and reimbursement for telehealth visits, making this a potentially profitable opportunity for healthcare providers.

- Telehealth platforms and solutions are continuously improving and becoming a seamless, high-quality digital experience. Using a mobile phone or internet connection is an affordable way for almost all patients to connect with doctors, therapists, and specialists.

- The availability of data and analytics generated by telehealth solutions enables providers to use insights to deliver better health outcomes.

- Telehealth aligns with other technological options such as remote patient monitoring to provide consumers with virtual triage and emergency intervention options.[9]

Delivering an Enterprise-Grade Telehealth Solution

For medical practices planning to implement a telehealth solution, Mend offers an AI-driven platform that enables patients and providers to connect and interact easily using video conferencing and live-chat options.

Patients:

The software allows patients to:

- Schedule, manage, and cancel appointments on the go

- Complete and submit digital patient intake forms to save time

- Create automated appointment reminders and alerts to reduce no-shows and last-minute cancellations

- Share files containing text, images, and video clips via a secure connection

- Integrate with existing electronic medical records and practice management systems

- Access a digital waiting room where they can watch relevant content while waiting for their appointment

Providers:

The platform allows providers to connect online with patients to:

- Improve patient engagement by more than 85% using digital forms that encourage patient commitment, reduce waiting room time, and make scheduling easier.[10]

- Increase patient satisfaction by 23% by providing simple technology, addressing privacy concerns, and offering effective communication.[11]

- Reduce no-show rates by reviewing patients' history and applying an algorithm to predict the chances of missing an appointment.

- Integrates with most electronic health platforms.

- Offers low bandwidth connectivity for telehealth visits, enabling providers to reach patients located anywhere and increase their geographical

From custom workflow solutions that streamline processes to automated communications, Mend's solution permits providers to follow patients throughout their entire journey, providing comprehensive healthcare and retaining their loyalty.

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Key Benefits of a Good
Telehealth Solution

Implementing a good telehealth solution helps practices reduce no-shows and boost patient satisfaction significantly.[12]

Mastering Motivational Challenges

Patients with mental health challenges such as anxiety or depression often have difficulty finding the motivation to leave their homes, travel to appointments, and seek care from practitioners. Telehealth enables patients to connect effectively with providers from the location of their choice using secure, HIPAA-compliant software.

Foiling Forgetfulness

Many patients endure short-term memory loss, while others lead such activity-filled lives they have problems keeping track of scheduled appointments and need multiple reminders. Automated calls, text messages, or email reminders can reduce no-show rates by up to 50%.[13]

Conquering Calendar Conflicts

Patients affected by employment, travel, or childcare clashes often reschedule unexpectedly to resolve calendar conflicts. Mend's telehealth solution offers the flexibility to take ownership of their appointments and send reschedule requests at short notice. This allows the practice to fill the time slot with another appointment, ensuring no slots go to waste and no appointments are missed.

Promoting Patient Satisfaction

The platform offers customization of specialties and categories, and integration with the EMR enables telehealth staff to match patients with providers based on availability and expertise. This improves capacity utilization and ensures patients connect with the most appropriate provider for their condition, increasing patient satisfaction, and improving patient experience.

Reducing Financial Waste

Mend's solution offers secure, easy connectivity regardless of location or the type of device patients use. With HD video quality even across low bandwidths, virtual visits cost less and require fewer resources by:

• Improving scheduling
• Reducing no-shows
• Minimizing overheads, errors, and paperwork
• Optimizing provider time

The solution saves on costs while enabling providers to grow their patient base.

Decreasing Data Difficulties

Utilizing data helps practices improve patient engagement and track their progress more easily. Mend's solution gathers data from digital clinical assessment forms, patient surveys, EMR integrations, and other sources. The program produces reports and insights providers can apply to improve efficiency and optimize their delivery of patient care.

A Unique Solution for the Future

Borne out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the telehealth revolution has upended healthcare delivery and changed the industry for the better. Offering telemedicine boosts a practice's productivity and profitability, improves patient engagement, and increases retention and loyalty. Providers benefit from new features and functionalities that allow them to streamline operations, and patients enjoy the advantages of greater convenience and reduced costs for travel and childcare.

Schedule a demo of our telehealth product today and discover the secure, user-friendly, and integrated digital solution to your telemedicine requirements.

Schedule a Demo

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About Mend

Mend is an enterprise-grade patient engagement and telehealth platform designed to help healthcare organizations profitably scale their practice and care for more patients. Founded in 2014, Mend is on a mission to revolutionize healthcare delivery so that every patient can receive extraordinary care. Mend makes it easy for healthcare providers to securely and efficiently communicate with their patients and colleagues, without concerns of violating HIPAA compliance or misplacing patient information. Mend provides integrated in-office and virtual care experiences for over 100 specialties with more than 5 million patients.

Mend's comprehensive platform works hand-in-hand with all major EHR and PMS software to facilitate more than 400,000 telehealth visits per month, increase patient satisfaction by up to 23% reduce no-show rates as low as 4%, radically improve staff productivity, and help providers drive more revenue through better patient attendance.