Nemours

Majority of Parents Plan to Use Telemedicine for Pediatric Care

New findings released today by Nemours Children's Health System show 64 percent of parents polled have used or plan to use telemedicine within the next year for their child. The survey, Telemedicine in America 2017: Parents Use of Virtual Visits, found that only 15 percent of parents have tried these services, but a strong majority is receptive to online doctor visits for common childhood ailments and routine well-child visits.

See Survey Findings »

"As parents look to raise children with accessible and evidence-based health care, telemedicine can be a convenient and high-quality option for busy families," said Gina Altieri, CPA, Senior Vice President and Chief of Strategy Integration for Nemours. "Even though use of telemedicine is climbing slowly, our findings show that we are on the cusp of a breakthrough in adoption as families are becoming more interested and accepting of receiving care virtually."

Compared to a similar study conducted by Nemours in 2014, parents' use of online doctor's visits, while still relatively low, has grown by 125 percent, and their awareness of telemedicine services has increased 88 percent. While this survey—fielded by Nemours' internal consumer and strategic insights group—demonstrates the growing awareness and increasing acceptance of telemedicine, it also reveals the limited uses that parents consider for online visits. They are most willing to use telehealth services for cold and flu (58 percent), pink eye (51 percent), and rashes (48 percent), in addition to well-child visits (41 percent). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, acute childhood ailments, such as these, accounted for an estimated 171 million in-office visits in 2012 for children under 18.

Conversely, parents said they are more reluctant to consider telemedicine for treating chronic conditions. Those surveyed said they likely would never consider using telehealth services for diabetes (53 percent), asthma (43 percent), and ADHD (36 percent). Despite this hesitation, previous research published in Pediatrics has shown that these conditions that necessitate chronic care can be effectively treated through telemedicine.

Many parents report that work schedules and time pressures create problems for securing in-office appointments. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, parents are likely to spend an average of 30 hours on well-child visits during their child's first five years alone. In the poll, parents who have used telemedicine cited convenience, after-hours accessibility, and immediacy as the top three reasons for doing so. A strong majority (74.7 percent) of these parents rated the experience as superior to an in-office doctor visit.

Jesse Smith of Orlando used Nemours CareConnect when her five-year-old son Parker became ill on a weekend. "The entire process from registering to connecting with the doctor was quick and easy. The care my son received was just what I'd expect from an in-office visit but we were able to do it all from my couch. I will definitely use the service again," said Jones.

Additional survey findings include:

- Dads surveyed were more likely to have already used telemedicine services for themselves or their children (33.9 percent), compared to moms (21.7 percent).
- Among parents who have tried an online doctor visit for their child, nearly all of them (97.5 percent) rated the experience as equal to or better than an in-office visit.
- Most parents who have already had an online doctor visit for their child cite convenience (80.7 percent) as a prime reason for choosing online rather than in-office doctor visits.
- A majority of those who have already had an online doctor visit for their child also looked to telemedicine for more immediate care than waiting for an in-office visit (53.4 percent) or for an after-hours medical opinion (52.3 percent).
- Among those who were very comfortable with trying new remote sensing devices, such as those attached to a smartphone for sending vitals or other clinical measures to a doctor (48 percent), 29 percent of them already had had an online doctor visit for their child. This suggests a pattern of "early adopters" for new technologies in pursuing children's healthcare.

"At Nemours, we've seen how telemedicine can positively impact patients' lives," said Shayan Vyas, MD, Director of Telemedicine for Nemours Children's Hospital. "The overwhelmingly positive response we've seen from parents who are early adopters of telemedicine really reinforces the feasibility of online doctor visits and sets the stage for real change in the way healthcare is delivered."

Nemours has implemented telemedicine throughout its health system with direct-to-consumer care for acute, chronic, and post-surgical appointments, as well as through its partner hospitals, schools, and even cruise ships. Nemours CareConnect is a 24/7 on-demand pediatric telehealth program which provides families access to Nemours pediatricians through a smartphone, tablet, or computer—whether they are at home, school, or even on the sports field. If necessary, the physician

may order a prescription, using geo-location service on the smartphone or tablet, and send it to the nearest pharmacy.

Additionally, Nemours CareConnect is used to bring pediatric specialists into affiliated community hospitals. Providers at these hospitals may use the telehealth tool to have a Nemours specialist remotely assess a patient. When specialists can see patients via the secure video connection, they are better able to determine the safest, most-effective care.

The survey, Telemedicine in America 2017: Parents Use of Virtual Visits, was fielded by SHC Universal on February 15-20, 2017, on behalf of the Nemours' Consumer and Strategic Insights Group. The survey was conducted online among 500 U.S. caregivers ages 21+. Results were weighted by census region to align with actual proportions in the national population. Survey participants had to be the parent, grandparent, or legal guardian of at least one child 17 years old or younger, and either had to be solely responsible, or share responsibility, for scheduling a child's doctor visits. Because the sample was based on the SHC Universal panels of those who agree to take part in web surveys, no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Del., and Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando, Fla., along with outpatient facilities in six states, delivering pediatric primary, specialty and urgent care. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, KidsHealth.org and offers on-demand, online video patient visits through Nemours CareConnect.

Established as The Nemours Foundation through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to families in the communities it serves.

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