What do we need to know to determine effectiveness, value of telehealth for pain management and SUD?

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What I wanted to cover

• Plethora of new models for SUD & pain management treatment
• Just beginning of innovation curve
• What evidence do we need to support this innovation?
Temporary Payment and Regulatory Changes → Evidence! → Permanent Policies & Practices
Central dilemma

Telemedicine’s ability to make care convenient and more accessible — the key to its enormous potential to improve the health of many patients — may also be its Achilles’ heel.
Become ill

Consider seeking expert opinion

Visit physician office

100 patients

40 patients

29 patients
Does this increase in care translate into better health?

If so, is it high-value care? High value = improvements in care at a reasonable cost

How can policy be crafted to ensure increase is concentrated among those who would most benefit (i.e., avoid overuse)?
Temporary Payment and Regulatory Changes

Evidence!

Permanent Policies & Practices

Utilization & Spending

Quality
- Which condition
- Which patient

Access & Equity

Role of phone visits

Impact of new payment models

Not Critical Evidence Gaps:
- Patient interest
- Technology
- Saves patient time/travel

SUD care may be given benefit of doubt
Pitfalls

• Assuming it will work
• Lack of clarity on the intervention
• Too much focus on those not getting care vs. those already getting care
• Comparing outcomes those who receive telehealth vs. those who do not
Comparing telemedicine to in-person buprenorphine treatment in U.S. veterans with opioid use disorder

“Tele-bup and in-person buprenorphine patients had largely similar characteristics.”

Lin, et al. JSAT, 2022
Changes in care at high-telemedicine practices vs. low-telemedicine practices

No change in:
- MOUD duration
- Overdose rates
- Injection-related infections
- # patients treated

Less urine toxicology testing

No telemedicine practices

High telemedicine practices

Preliminary results
Do bundled payment codes change the landscape?

- Goal to echo OTP payment system for office-based physicians
- Give providers more flexibility
  - “We are announcing proposals so that the government doesn't stand in the way of patient care, by giving clinicians the support they need to spend valuable time coordinating the care of these patients to ensure their diseases are well-managed and their quality of life is preserved.” Seema Verma
- Support telehealth and treatment in home
- Encompass all care
  - Overall management, care coordination, individual and group psychotherapy, substance use counseling

**Introduced in 2020**

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<td>• Developed the treatment plan</td>
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