

INSIGHTS



# The value of telehealth in a connected system

Using digital care to support overall health



**Telehealth connectivity has made getting care more convenient than ever for consumers** – but the advantages for employers can go far beyond convenience.

Empowering your employees to choose where, when, and how they get care can motivate them to be more proactive about their health – which can reduce absenteeism and potentially help keep health care costs down.

**The truth about telehealth**

Research shows that telehealth has the potential to save U.S. companies more than \$6 billion a year.<sup>1</sup> And 93% of consumers who've used telehealth say that it lowered their health care costs.<sup>2</sup> But not all telehealth care is created equal.

**Telehealth works best in an integrated, connected system – but in most cases, it's delivered in a vacuum by third-party providers.** They can't access medical records or monitor their patients' conditions. And their services typically aren't covered by employer-sponsored health plans – third-party telehealth can come with additional costs for employers, employees, or both.

**Demand is high – why is utilization so low?**

While employer demand for third-party telehealth services is high, employee utilization is surprisingly low. In 2016, **more than 70% of large companies offered employer-sponsored telehealth services in states where it's allowed – but a survey showed that only 3% of employees had used them in the first half of the year.**<sup>3</sup>

People's biggest concerns about using telehealth services are cost, privacy, and losing the personal relationship with their doctor.<sup>4</sup> Because telehealth care at Kaiser Permanente happens within our connected system, we're uniquely positioned to address these concerns.



## Connecting telehealth with total health

At Kaiser Permanente, we use telehealth for preventive care and chronic condition management, not just for simple one-time health care needs. And telehealth is a component of our integrated care program – not an add-on. It's available to all members and built into your company's health plan.

Kaiser Permanente members get the same high-quality care they'd get in person – care that's covered by their plan, captured in their electronic health record, and becomes part of their overall health care experience.

### Advantages of telehealth at Kaiser Permanente



## Using telehealth to drive quality

Telehealth connectivity helps us be more responsive to our members' needs. Providers can consult with each other instantly and work more efficiently. Care can be delivered sooner by the specialists who can best provide it, which can lead to healthier outcomes for our members. Here are some examples of how we're applying telehealth technology in new and innovative ways:

### **VIDEO CONSULTS: Connecting providers across locations and specialties**

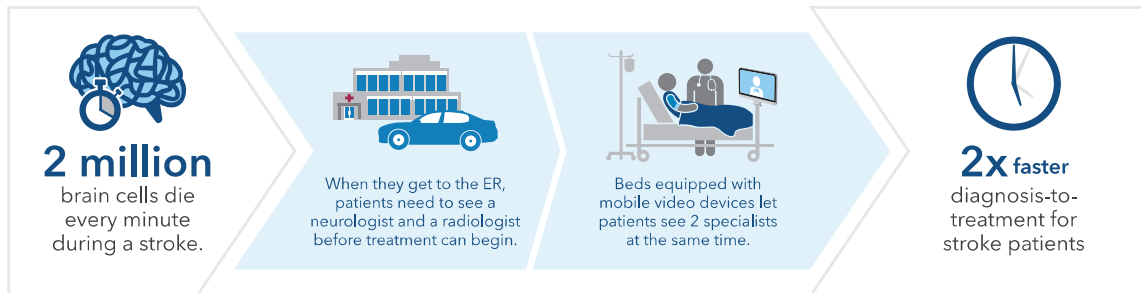
Many Kaiser Permanente emergency departments use video to consult with specialists at our regional pediatric intensive care units. Within seconds, the remote specialist becomes another member of the care team – operating the camera and observing the situation in high definition, including changes in the patient's vital signs and appearance. The specialist can make important decisions, recommend treatment, and assist remotely with procedures performed by the emergency team.

Telehealth empowers employees to be more proactive about their health, reducing absenteeism and potentially keeping care costs down.

## TELESTROKE: Accelerating care when every second matters

Time is of the essence during a stroke – approximately 2 million brain cells die every minute until treatment is initiated.<sup>5</sup> Since we piloted our telestroke program in many Kaiser Permanente emergency departments, we're starting treatment twice as fast.<sup>6</sup>

### Telestroke: accelerating care when every second matters



Telehealth is central to how we practice medicine at Kaiser Permanente – we use it to improve outcomes and deliver better care experiences every day. Whether your employees have a traditional office visit or choose one of our digital care options, they'll get care from Kaiser Permanente providers who can access and update medical records, coordinate follow-up appointments, and make telehealth care part of their overall health care experience.

That's the power of telehealth delivered within a connected health care system: It all works together to support the total health of your employees – and your business.

### Empowering employees through telehealth

- Save a trip to the doctor's office with a **phone call**
- Schedule face-to-face **video** appointments with a doctor
- Connect with a care team anytime via **email**
- Stay on top of health concerns 24/7 on **kp.org**

Find more business insights at [kp.org/choosebetter](https://kp.org/choosebetter).

<sup>1</sup>"Current Telemedicine Technology Could Mean Big Savings," Willis Towers Watson, August 11, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>*The 2016 HealthMine Digital Health Report: State and Impact of Digital Health Tools*, HealthMine, 2016.

<sup>3</sup>Large Employers' 2017 Health Plan Design Survey, National Business Group on Health, August 2016.

<sup>4</sup>Melinda Beck, "How Telemedicine Is Transforming Health Care," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2016.

<sup>5</sup>"Five Fast Things You Should Know About Stroke," American Heart Association, April 28, 2016, [newsroom.heart.org/news/five-fast-things-you-should-know-about-stroke](https://newsroom.heart.org/news/five-fast-things-you-should-know-about-stroke).

<sup>6</sup>Kaiser Permanente internal data.