CLOSING THE TELEHEALTH GAP

A survey of healthcare providers on the barriers and opportunities to emerging delivery models

Avizia

INTRODUCTION

Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law in 2010, more than 16 million uninsured Americans have gained health coverage. With this surge comes a need for greater access to healthcare services. Yet, in the age of 24/7 assistance and constant communication through social media, email, texting and video chats, healthcare is primarily trapped in a world where in-person interaction is still the primary form of communication between clinicians and patients.

To meet the changing needs of a growing patient population, many healthcare providers—whether hospitals, physician groups, clinics or ambulatory centers—are turning to telemedicine technology to effectively and efficiently deliver healthcare services when patients need it, regardless of their physical location.

In addition to meeting patient needs, telehealth is addressing other industrywide mandates such as lowering the cost of care, offering more proactive and preventive care, maintaining insurer network adequacy, and improving patient compliance and satisfaction. Several studies have demonstrated that telehealth and remote patient monitoring improve care and patient satisfaction while reducing hospitalizations. Telehealth does not come without its own challenges, however. Reimbursement and payment structures, state laws and regulations are proven obstacles to the healthcare industry's adoption of telehealth technologies.

In this survey, healthcare executives shared their organization's current telehealth practices—what service lines are leveraging it, what types of technologies are used, as well as the driving forces for the expansion of telehealth. They also tell us about their obstacles, from reimbursement issues to clinician resistance, and what they hope will change to propel their practices into the future.

THE STATE OF TELEHEALTH USE

What is telehealth? The definition can be subjective. For the purposes of this survey, respondents were advised that the term telehealth encompasses a wide definition of remote healthcare, including patient consultations via video conferencing, transmission of still images, e-health including patient portals, remote monitoring of vital signs, continuing medical education, consumer-focused wireless applications and nursing call centers, among other applications.

Sixty-three percent of healthcare providers use telehealth in some way. Of this group, 72% are in hospitals and health systems, 52% are in physician groups and clinics, and 36% are in other provider organizations, such as ambulatory centers and nursing homes. [Figure 1]

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION USE TELEHEALTH?
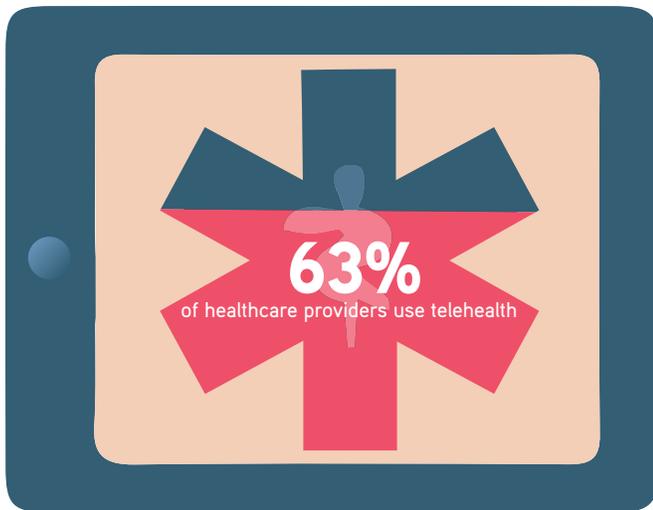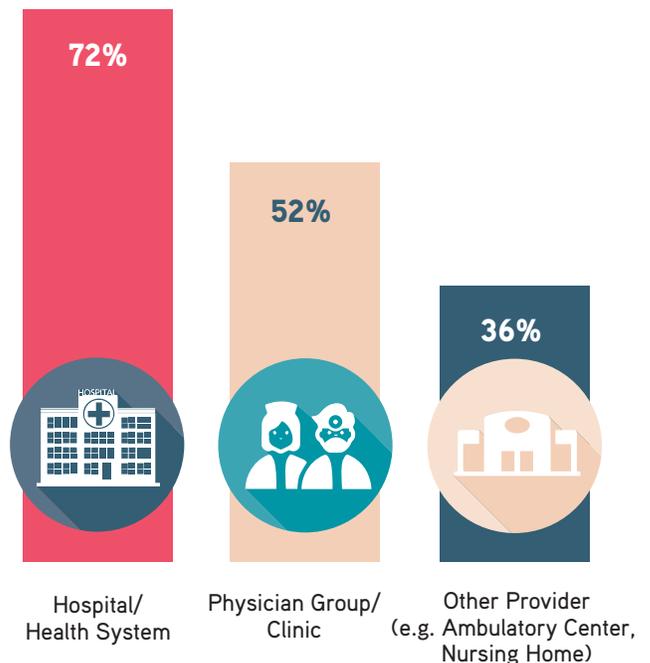

63%
of healthcare providers use telehealth

FIGURE 1 – *To the best of your knowledge, does your organization currently use telehealth/telemedicine?*

WHO IS USING TELEHEALTH?

72%

52%

36%

Hospital/
Health System

Physician Group/
Clinic

Other Provider
(e.g. Ambulatory Center,
Nursing Home)

The most common service lines using telehealth today include stroke (44%), behavioral health (39%), staff education and training (28%), and primary care (22%). Respondents in other practice areas, including neurology, pediatrics and cardiology, report telehealth use at less than 20% . Today, there may be limited diversification, but when it comes to healthcare executives' desires, the future of telehealth is promising. There is a greater emphasis on the patient, with patient education and training leading the wish list (34%), closely followed by remote patient home monitoring (30%) and primary care (27%). [Figure 2]

WHERE TELEHEALTH IS USED NOW – AND WHERE IT'S HEADED IN THE FUTURE: BY PRACTICE AREA

NOW VS. FUTURE

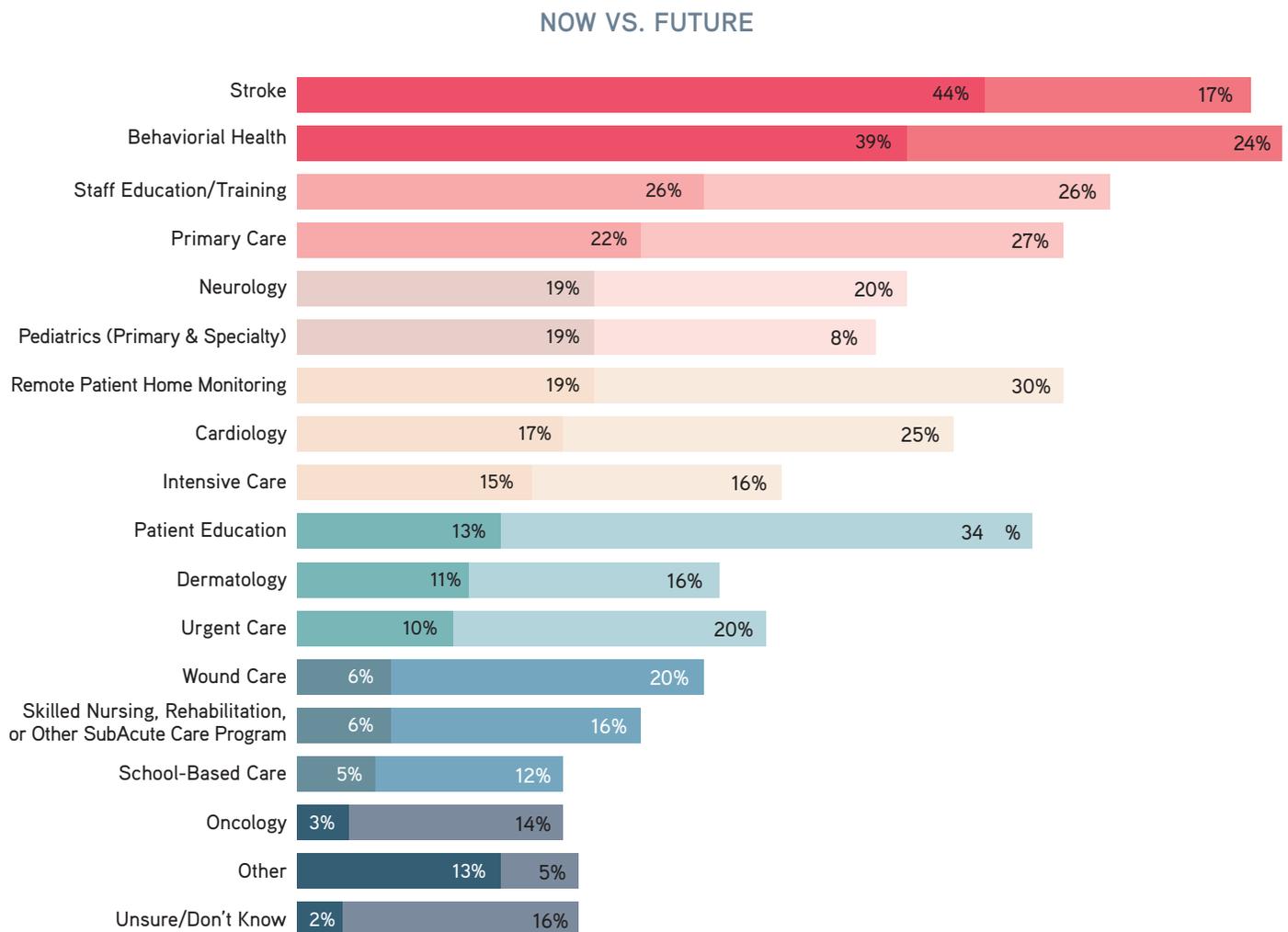| Practice Area	Now	Future
Stroke	44%	17%
Behaviorial Health	39%	24%
Staff Education/Training	26%	26%
Primary Care	22%	27%
Neurology	19%	20%
Pediatrics (Primary & Specialty)	19%	8%
Remote Patient Home Monitoring	19%	30%
Cardiology	17%	25%
Intensive Care	15%	16%
Patient Education	13%	34 %
Dermatology	11%	16%
Urgent Care	10%	20%
Wound Care	6%	20%
Skilled Nursing, Rehabilitation, or Other SubAcute Care Program	6%	16%
School-Based Care	5%	12%
Oncology	3%	14%
Other	13%	5%
Unsure/Don't Know	2%	16%

FIGURE 2 – In what practice areas does your organization use telehealth/telemedicine?
In what practice areas would you like your organization to implement telehealth/telemedicine in the future?
Multiple responses permitted in both questions.

FIGURE 3

WHERE TELEHEALTH IS USED NOW –
AND WHERE IT'S HEADED IN THE FUTURE: BY TECHNOLOGY

NOW VS. FUTURE

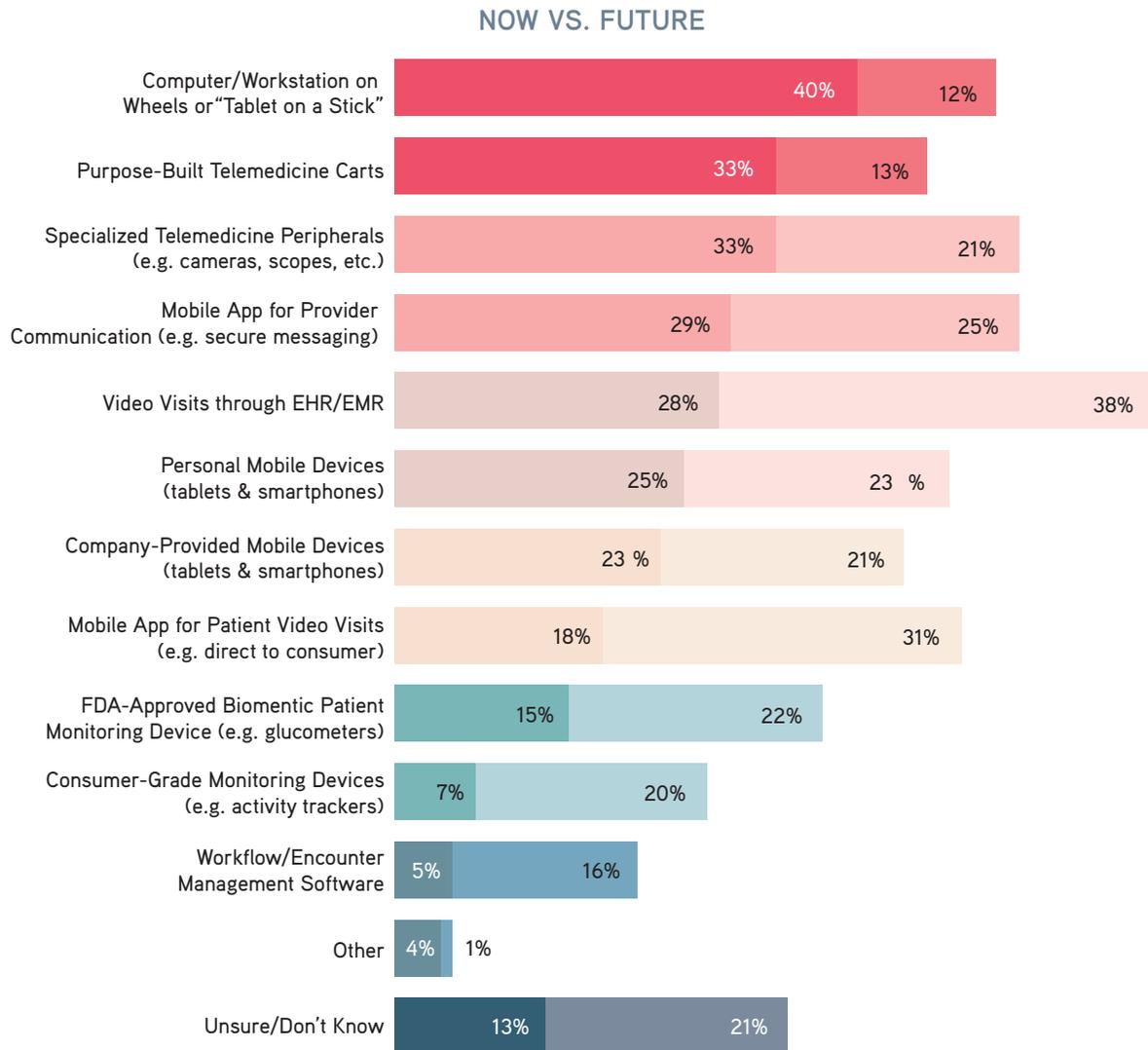| Technology	Now	Future
Computer/Workstation on Wheels or "Tablet on a Stick"	40%	12%
Purpose-Built Telemedicine Carts	33%	13%
Specialized Telemedicine Peripherals (e.g. cameras, scopes, etc.)	33%	21%
Mobile App for Provider Communication (e.g. secure messaging)	29%	25%
Video Visits through EHR/EMR	28%	38%
Personal Mobile Devices (tablets & smartphones)	25%	23 %
Company-Provided Mobile Devices (tablets & smartphones)	23 %	21%
Mobile App for Patient Video Visits (e.g. direct to consumer)	18%	31%
FDA-Approved Biomentic Patient Monitoring Device (e.g. glucometers)	15%	22%
Consumer-Grade Monitoring Devices (e.g. activity trackers)	7%	20%
Workflow/Encounter Management Software	5%	16%
Other	4%	1%
Unsure/Don't Know	13%	21%

FIGURE 3 – *What types of telehealth/telemedicine technologies are used by your organization currently?*
What types of telehealth/telemedicine technology (not currently utilized) would you/your organization most like to implement/use in the next 2 years?
Multiple responses permitted in both questions.

Currently, the most popular use of telehealth is through a computer workstation on wheels or 'tablet on a stick' with 40% of responding organizations reporting usage. Telemedicine carts and specialized peripherals (e.g. cameras, scopes) are the next most popular at 33% each. The future, on the other hand, looks entirely different, with executives most wanting their organiza-tions to implement video visits through the electronic medical records system (EMRs), and adopting mobile apps for provider-to-provider and patient-to-provider communications. These tech-nologies are indeed more in line with communications devices commonly used today. [Figure 3]

SPOTLIGHT ON: DIFFERENCES AMONG THE STATES

A common phrase among healthcare executives is that healthcare is almost always local—rare is the patient who travels long distances for everyday care, barring special requirements and rare disease states. And while healthcare services vary in cost, access and quality by metropolitan area, there are clear differences between populous states and less populous states.

Key findings include:

- Healthcare providers in large states (population 8 million to 14.9 million) are the least likely among all state groups to use telehealth, possibly due to fewer physician shortages. Those using it are very engaged, leveraging telehealth for 12 out of 20 practice areas.

- Telemedicine is considered a competitive factor in large states, which score higher than the rest of the country in using the technology to keep up with competition, reach new patient populations and increase engagement with current patients. To survive in today's economy, hospitals are using telehealth to offer more service lines and cast wider nets to patients. Larger states also score higher than the rest of the country in being driven to telehealth by value-based care and improving clinical outcomes.

- Small states (population up to 4 million) are more likely to encounter regulatory issues in their states, ranking medical licensure and privileging higher than the rest of country as barriers to using telehealth.

- Small states are more likely to use purpose-built telemedicine carts and specialized telemedicine peripherals than the rest of the country.

THE DRIVERS—AND THE OBSTACLES

Patients are at the heart of what is driving healthcare providers to pursue telehealth. This understandably mirrors new expectations of healthcare providers that place the patient in the center of industrywide changes, from increasing access to improving patient satisfaction. Nearly 3 in 4 respondents cite consumer demand as a driver for their organization's adoption of telehealth. Improving clinical outcomes (66%) and meeting the goal of delivering value-based care (62%) are also motivators for well over half the respondents. [Figure 4]

"Changes in reimbursement models (volume to value) are driving much of the interest in telemedicine," said Shawn Farrell, VP of Clinical Implementation at Avizia. "As with providers and health systems, consumers (patients) are also being asked to bear more of the risk/cost of healthcare through high deductible and high copay health plans, so they are looking for lower cost alternatives to the hospital, emergency room, urgent care, and retail care that are both convenient and of high quality."

Various groups cite different drivers of telehealth adoption. Those in senior management, including CEOs, presidents and administrators, believe more than all other groups that meeting value-based care goals and expanding service lines are driving their organizations to pursue telehealth. Those in information technology management are interestingly focused on revenue drivers, perhaps as a mandate from the senior leadership team—reaching new patient populations, increasing revenue and lowering operating costs were all top drivers for this group. Clinicians, not surprisingly, believe telehealth is most driven by improving clinical outcomes. [Figure 5]

As multiple factors drive healthcare providers to adopt telehealth, they face legitimate obstacles to implementing these new technologies. The top two barriers, encountered by about half of organizations, are the necessary investments for telehealth technology and infrastructure (50%) and issues related to reimbursement (48%). Contrary to other studies that cite consumer

adoption as top barriers, for providers the main obstacles remain centered around cash flow—without enough to fund the technology, or enough potential revenue to justify an expense. [Figure 6]

There was not much disagreement among different groups on the barriers to implementing telehealth, however certain barriers were felt more strongly in certain groups. More than any other group, IT executives cited clinician resistance as a barrier to implementation, a common feeling among a tech-savvy group when teaching new technologies to end users. Additionally, physician practices and clinics have more trouble with maintenance and ongoing support for the technology (32%) than hospitals and health systems (13%), most likely due to limited IT resources.

FIGURE 4
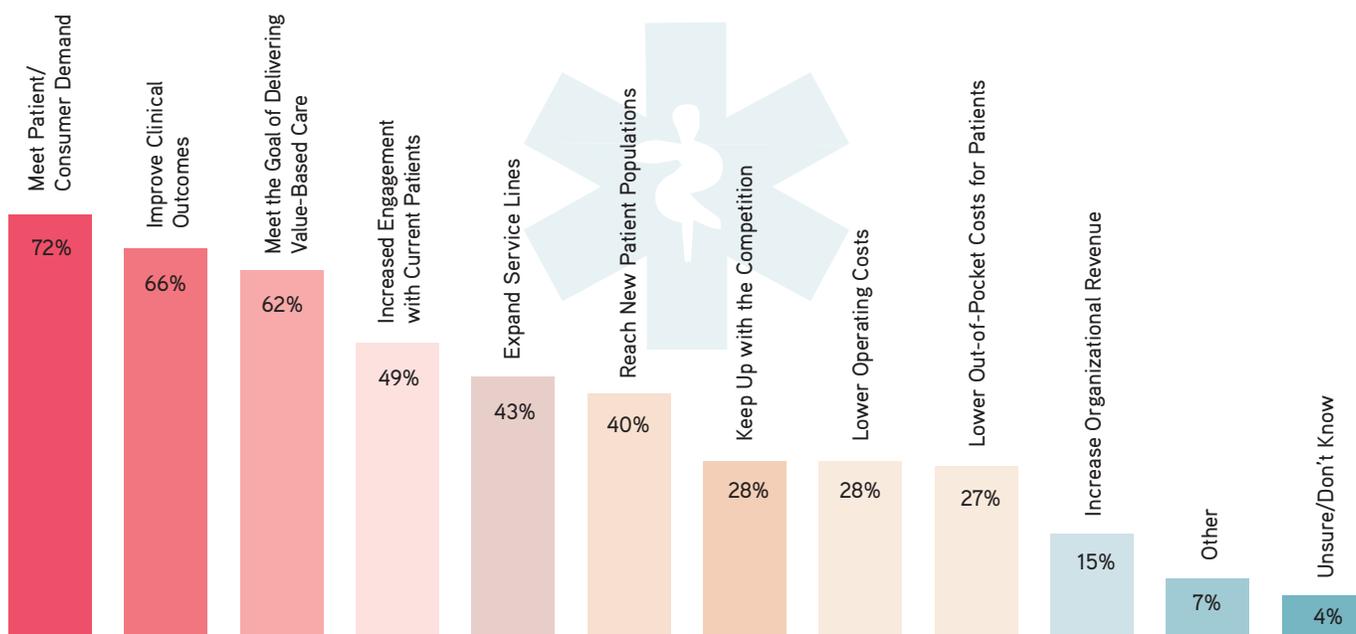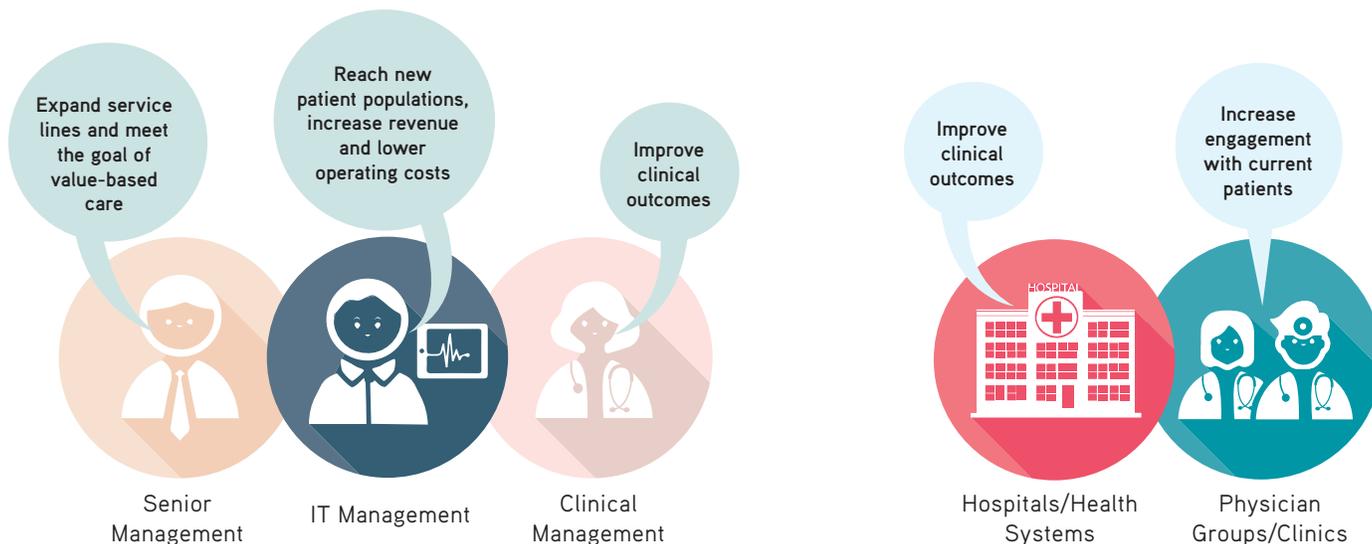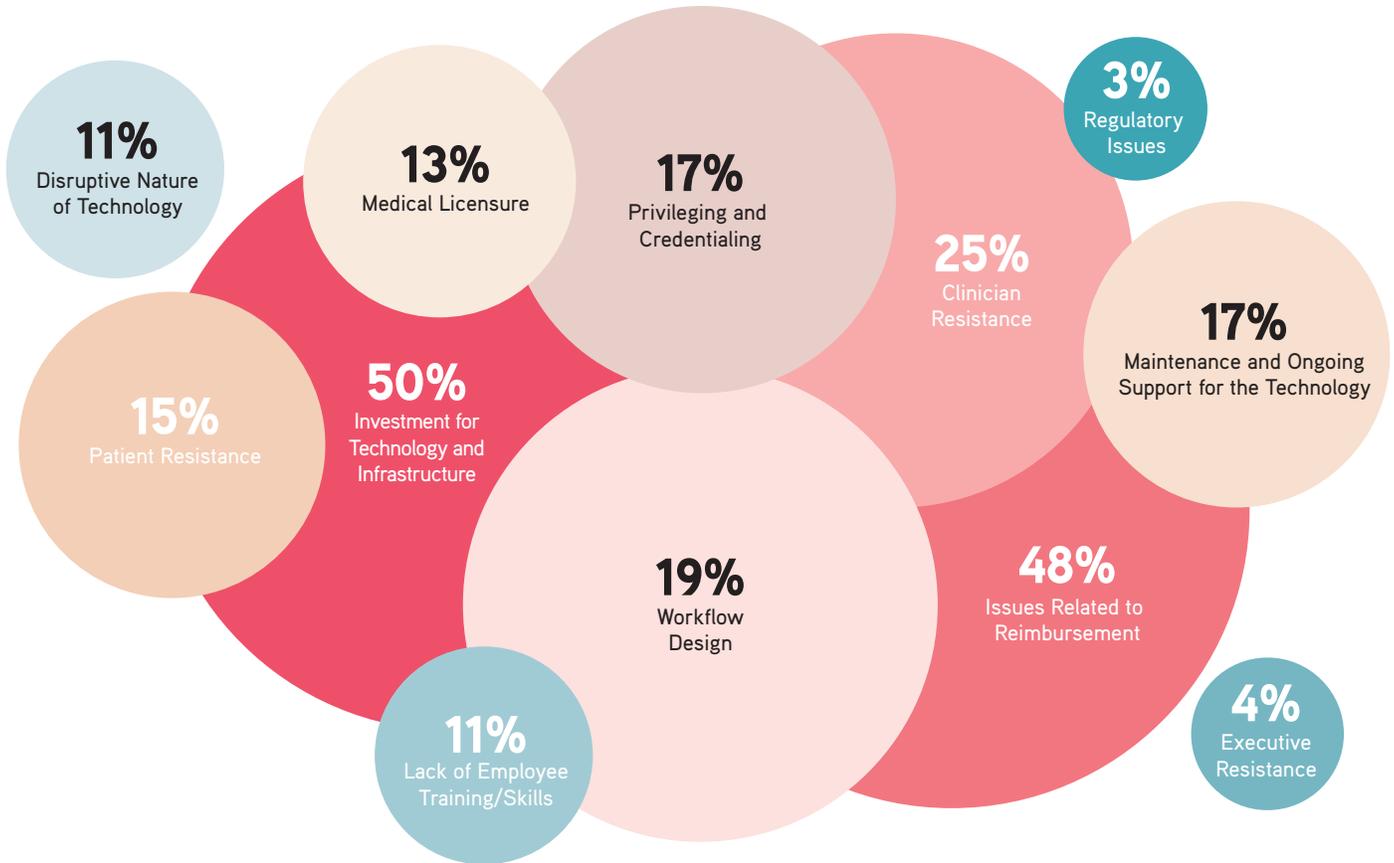# WHAT'S DRIVING THE USE OF TELEHEALTH? PATIENTS.

Driver	%
Meet Patient/Consumer Demand	72%
Improve Clinical Outcomes	66%
Meet the Goal of Delivering Value-Based Care	62%
Increased Engagement with Current Patients	49%
Expand Service Lines	43%
Reach New Patient Populations	40%
Keep Up with the Competition	28%
Lower Operating Costs	28%
Lower Out-of-Pocket Costs for Patients	27%
Increase Organizational Revenue	15%
Other	7%
Unsure/Don't Know	4%

FIGURE 5
KEY DRIVERS, ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC GROUPS

Senior Management: Expand service lines and meet the goal of value-based care

IT Management: Reach new patient populations, increase revenue and lower operating costs

Clinical Management: Improve clinical outcomes

Hospitals/Health Systems: Improve clinical outcomes

Physician Groups/Clinics: Increase engagement with current patients

FIGURES 4, 5 – *To the best of your knowledge, what is driving your organization's use of telehealth/telemedicine?*

FIGURE 6

BARRIERS TO LEVERAGING TELEHEALTH

11%
Disruptive Nature of Technology

13%
Medical Licensure

17%
Privileging and Credentialing

3%
Regulatory Issues

25%
Clinician Resistance

17%
Maintenance and Ongoing Support for the Technology

15%
Patient Resistance

50%
Investment for Technology and Infrastructure

19%
Workflow Design

48%
Issues Related to Reimbursement

11%
Lack of Employee Training/Skills

4%
Executive Resistance

SPOTLIGHT ON: REIMBURSEMENT ISSUES

Today, not all telehealth visits are reimbursed. The laws and regulations around telehealth reimbursement are complicated and vast, representing a major barrier to healthcare providers advancing their use of the technology.

Nearly half of providers (48%) who use telehealth cite reimbursement issues as a barrier to implementation, and 28% who don't currently use telehealth cite it as a barrier to adoption. Resoundingly, providers cite reimbursement issues as the barrier they would most like to eliminate today (34%), even over investments necessary for technology (22%) and clinician resistance (9%).

Encouragingly, over the past two years the number of states mandating reimbursement parity for telehealth has risen to 29, and earlier this year a group of senators introduced the CONNECT for Health Act, which would remove many of the restrictions to telehealth and remote monitoring under Medicare.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

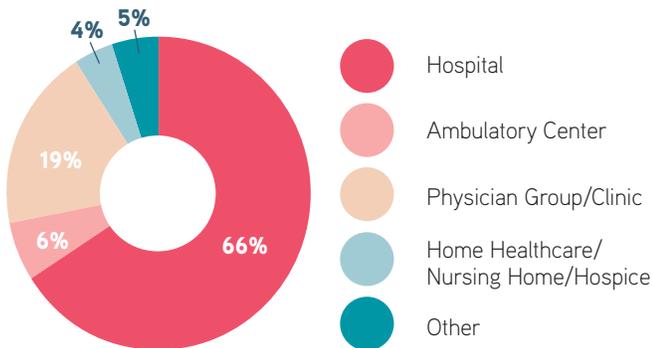**FIGURE 7A**

RESPONDENTS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

- Hospital
- Ambulatory Center
- Physician Group/Clinic
- Home Healthcare/Nursing Home/Hospice
- Other

FIGURE 7B

RESPONDENTS BY TITLE

- Senior Leadership (CEO, Administrator, President, Exec. Dir.)
- Case Management (Dir. Admissions, Privacy Officer, Dir. Quality, Dir. Managed Care, Etc.)
- Operations (COO, VP Operations, Etc.)
- Information Technology Management (CIO, Dir./Mgr. E-Health, Chief Security Officer, Dir./Mgr. Telecommunications
- Clinical Management (CNO, CMIO, CMO, Dir. Nursing, Chief of Staff, Dir. Medical Informatics)
- Other

FIGURE 7C

RESPONDENTS BY GEOGRAPHY

- "Super States" (>14M residents)
- Large States (8M to 13.9M residents)
- Medium States (4M to 7.9M residents)
- Small States (<3.9M residents)
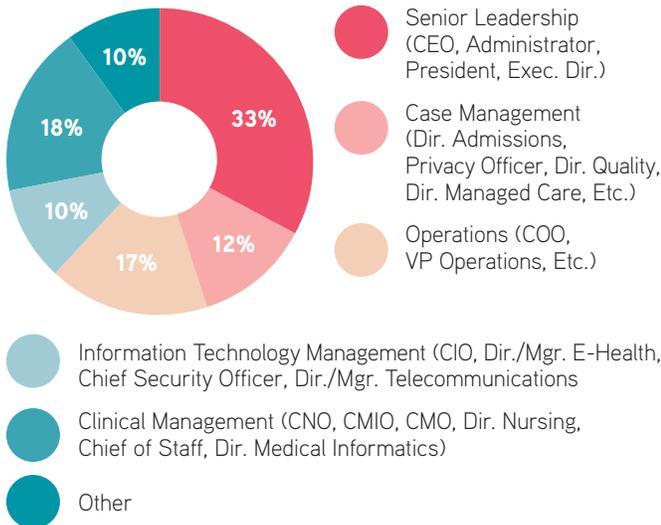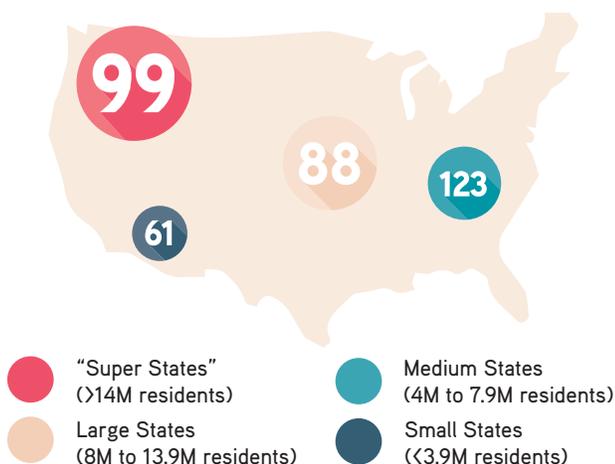
This briefing summarizes the results of a custom research survey conducted by Modern Healthcare Custom Media on behalf of Avizia. The purpose of the research is to gauge how and why healthcare providers are using telehealth in their organizations.

Invitations to participate in a web-based survey were sent via email to 15,000 healthcare executives in Modern Healthcare's database during March 2016. As an incentive to complete the survey, respondents were offered the chance to win one of two $250 gift cards. The findings of this survey may be accepted as accurate, at a 95% confidence level, within a sampling tolerance of about +/- 5.5%.

ABOUT AVIZIA

Avizia is redefining healthcare with the only end-to-end telehealth platform that combines industry-leading video devices with software solutions to streamline care coordination, provider collaboration, and patient engagement. With its solutions found in 37 of the top 100 hospital networks in the United States and throughout 36 countries around the world, Avizia is enabling continuity of care by connecting any provider to any patient in any place.

ABOUT CUSTOM COMPUTER SPECIALISTS

Custom Computer Specialists is a technology solutions provider focusing on healthcare organizations of all sizes. From telehealth to security to supplemental staffing and network monitoring Custom's solutions are breaking down the barriers to ensure that quality care can be delivered from anywhere.

Closing the Telehealth Gap

For more information please contact Rick Rand at
631.761.1441 or **rrand@customonline.com**.

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