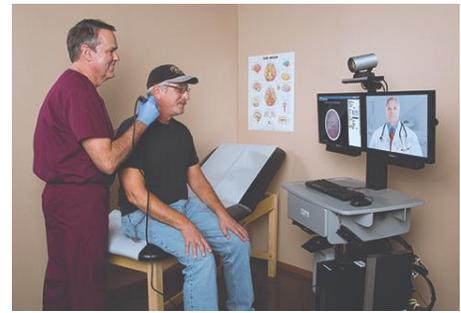


Office of Health Equity Veterans Health Administration Department of Veterans Affairs



TELEHEALTH DISPARITIES FACT SHEET

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INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

The Office of Health Equity-QUERI Partnered Evaluation Center examines and evaluates health outcomes and healthcare quality across the entire VA healthcare system paying special attention to whether gender, geographical location, or individuals that are members of minority population groups experience disparities in care.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is leading the nation in telemedicine advancement. As the largest integrated healthcare system in the United States, the VHA provides telehealth at more than 900 sites across the country in over 50 areas of specialty care.

HEALTH DISPARITIES

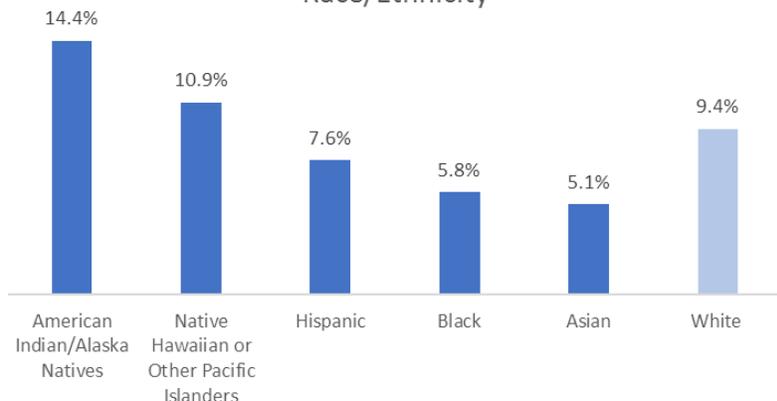
In 2017, 45 percent of Veterans who received care via telehealth lived in rural areas. However, a lack of availability of reliable connectivity or technology

can be a barrier to accessing this form of health care.

There many different types of telehealth that are used by Veterans to access VA health care. Two of the primary telehealth modalities are Clinical Video Telehealth and Home Telehealth.

Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) is a synchronous video encounter between a patient and a clinician who are at different locations. Clinical Video Telehealth use is 60% higher in American Indian/Alaska Natives (OR=1.6) and 20% higher in Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders (OR=1.2) compared with whites. There was lower CVT-Telehealth use in Asian (5.1%), Black (5.8%), and Hispanic (7.6%) groups compared with whites (9.4%).

VHA Clinical Video Telehealth Use by Veteran Race/Ethnicity



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Health Equity

Home Telehealth connects a Veteran to a VA hospital from home, and may entail checking symptoms and measuring vital signs (e.g., blood pressure) in the home. Home-Telehealth use is 20% higher in Blacks compared with whites; there is lower Home-Telehealth use in Asians (OR=0.6), and similar use by other racial/ethnic minority groups compared with whites.



Veteran demonstrates Home Telehealth System

REDUCING DISPARITIES AND IMPROVING ACCESS

The Office of Health Equity supports national and local efforts by VA to reduce Veteran health disparities by utilizing telehealth technology.

National Partnerships

VA is developing partnerships with external organizations to increase access to telehealth for Veterans. In 2018, VA announced partnerships with Philips, Wal-Mart, and the four (4) leading telecommunications providers. Philips is donating telehealth kits to select VFW and American Legion posts across the country to serve as rural access points for Veteran telehealth appointments. Wal-Mart will reserve time and space at select locations across the country to also serve as rural access points for Veteran telehealth appointments. All four (4) of the leading telecommunications providers (T-Mobile, Verizon, AT&T, and Sprint) will no longer

charge Veterans for data usage related to appointments conducted via the VA Video Connect App.

Local Efforts

The Atlanta VA Medical Center and the VA Medical Center in Dublin, Georgia collaborated to help Veterans with diabetes living in rural Georgia by utilizing telehealth technology to connect them to care to better manage their chronic condition.

This project connected Veterans with health care providers, pharmacists, dieticians and home telehealth nurses via telehealth to ensure that they received diabetes care that meets VA and American Diabetes Association recommendations.

The number of Veterans with diabetes who did not have a recent A1C was reduced by 50% through this telehealth intervention. Additionally, the number of Veterans without an HbA1C or with an HbA1C greater than 9 decreased by 23%.

More information about VA telehealth projects in progress, including several that focus on OHE populations, can be found at:

https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/inprogress/dec18/default.cfm?InProgressMenu=dec18-1&utm_source=InProgress&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=InProgress201812

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>

References

OHE-QUERI Partnered Evaluation Center (PEC 15-239). Office of Health Equity (OHE)-Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) Partnered Evaluation Center Report 2: Health Disparities in the Veterans Health Administration – Patient Experiences and Quality of Care. November 2017.