

18 May 2021

BRIEF19

A daily review of covid-19 research and policy

RESEARCH BRIEFING

Telemedicine use during the covid-19 pandemic: yet another inequity.

When the covid-19 pandemic broke out in the United States, people stopped going to see their doctors. The effect of this is unclear but telemedicine, which had long been heralded as one of the “next big things in medicine” finally took off. Except not everywhere.

A new study out today in [JAMA Network Open](#) found that telemedicine use in the United States varied greatly among the 2800 counties included in the study which covered the early pandemic period, through July 14, 2020. The study included people with commercial insurance or private plans that are approved by Medicare (Medicare Advantage plans) and therefore may not be applicable to US residents. Nevertheless, the study captured a large segment of the US population and provides insights.

Telemedicine use was lower in counties with lower median income and lower population density. These are also likely to have been some of the same people who would have difficulty reaching an in-person medical visit under normal circumstances. So, increases in telemedicine use among wealthy city-dwellers may have contributed to an existing set of health disparities. Naturally, areas with less broadband and those where telemedicine use was low before the covid-19 pandemic were also slow to take up telemedicine.

—*Jeremy Samuel Faust, MD MS*

POLICY BRIEFING

Biden announces commitment to share 80 million vaccine doses around the world.

With vaccine rates still rising in the US, it is clear that we will have enough for those who want protection against covid-19. Meanwhile, the world is looking for the US to send more doses abroad. President Biden announced that the US government will add 20 million more doses, raising the number of doses allocated to other nations to 80 million in the next six weeks.

Unlike previous announcements, this set of 20 million shipments will include the three vaccines currently being used in the US (Pfizer/BioNtech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson). The plan to send 60 million AstraZeneca doses as well has not changed.

In addition, the announcement comes two weeks after the administration announced plan to enact a patent waiver. It remains unclear how and when that move will translate into vaccines into arms around the world. So today’s announcement is easier to interpret. Help in the form of vaccines from the US is on the way.

—*Jeremy Samuel Faust, MD MS*

Kimi Chernoby, MD, JD, Policy Section Founder, Joshua Niforatos, MD Research Section Editor, Frederick Milgrim, MD, Editor-at-Large, Joshua Lesko, MD Lead Policy Analyst, Barb Cunningham, Copy-editor, Benjy Renton, Thread-of-the-Week, Anna Fang, Week-in-Review, Megan Davis, social media, Kane Elfman PhD, Publishing and Design, Jeremy Samuel Faust MD MS, Editor-in-Chief.
<http://www.brief19.com/> Twitter: [@brief_19](#) [submissions@brief19.com](#). Brief19 is a daily executive summary of covid-19-related medical research, news, and public policy. It was founded and created by frontline emergency medicine physicians with expertise in medical research critique, health and public policy.