7 Reasons to Embrace Telemedicine

By Gabriel Perna
Why telemedicine?

There is a lot of interest in telemedicine. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Robert Graham Center, a nonprofit organization focused on population health, nearly nine in 10 family physicians say they would use telemedicine as a tool to treat their patients if they were compensated for it.
Why is there so much excitement for telemedicine — especially in an era where a lot of new tech is looked at with a cynical eye? There are a variety of reasons, according to experts, that explain its burgeoning popularity. Here are seven.
"Telehealth allows me to work more hours, but still be able to be home. I'm able to coach my kids, go away on weekends. It's the biggest draw for me."

Mia Finkelston, a full-time telemedicine, family practice physician in Leonardtown, Md.
"For those parents who have a very sick child, imagine the impact on their work life when they have to bring their children in all the time. Imagine a patient with a chronic condition who has to make judgment calls on taking time off from work to see the doctor vs. just sucking it up. When integrated properly, telemedicine offers another access point for these patients."

Peter Antall, a Westlake Village, Calif.-based pediatrician, and CMO of Online Care Group, a telemedicine provider
"It doesn't fragment the patient-physician relationship. It's not a different healthcare [provider]. It's a different modality of care, it complements the existing relationship."

Kofi Jones, vice president of government affairs for American Well, a telehealth solutions provider
It opens up new data sources for providers

"The possibilities are endless: from e-prescribing to video visits to in-the-field evaluation of blood testing at a remote village in another continent to fitness trackers on the wrist of joggers in Central Park, the exchange of data and information under the umbrella of telemedicine offers opportunities for effective patient care that is timely."

It can bring providers together in population health

"Healthcare is trying to move primary care from the old-fashioned Marcus Welby-type practice to a team-based sport. When you have teams of care providers working together, [telemedicine] tools can become integrated into the process."

Joseph Kvedar, vice president of Boston-based Partners HealthCare Connected Health
It can save patients money

"[If the] average family budget in America is a $5 bill, a dollar of that $5 is spent on healthcare ... patients can go to the ER and spend $750 or they can spend $49 on a telemedicine visit."

Jane Sarasohn-Kahn, founder of THINK-Health, a healthcare consultancy
"[The psychiatrist's] patients didn't want to lose her … she kept her [original] practice, her patients were happy they didn't have to switch providers, they kept their relationship, [she] continued to get reimbursed … It's a great example of a new model of care."

Jan Oldenburg, a healthcare IT consultant, about a physician who continued to see her patients via telemedicine after moving out of state.