CARES Act Telehealth Expansion: Trends in Timely Follow-up Visits After HRRP Hospitalization and Association with 30-Day Readmissions

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Over half of timely follow-up visits after hospital discharge for HRRP health conditions utilized telehealth in April 2020

CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) telehealth expansion authorized in March 2020

Modality Of Timely Follow-Up Visit After Hospitalization for Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program (HRRP) Conditions* Among Medicare Fee-For-Service Hospitalizations, Apr—Sep 2020

- In 2019, <1% of follow-up visits utilized telehealth
- Use of telehealth follow-up decreased over the summer
- Study period ended in Sep 2020... next steps: did use of telehealth increase during the winter?

*HRRP conditions include heart failure, pneumonia, acute myocardial infarction, and COPD
Historically underserved groups used telehealth more than others

Telehealth more common among beneficiaries:

- <65 or age 85+
- Black, Hispanic, or Asian/Pacific Islander
- Dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid
- Metropolitan
- Highest level of social deprivation

Percent of Follow-Up Visits that Were Telehealth-Only After Hospitalization for HRRP Condition, by Dual Eligibility Status, Apr—Sep 2020

- E.g., In Sep 2020, 17% of follow-up visits among dually eligible were telehealth vs. 12% among non-dually eligible

- Uptake may suggest an opportunity for targeted interventions that promote telehealth-based follow-up among underserved populations
Telehealth associated with higher readmissions than in-person follow-up, but lower than no-follow-up

Unadjusted 30-Day Readmission Rate by Follow-Up Among Medicare FFS Hospitalizations, Apr—Sep 2020

- **AMI**
  - Telehealth only: 12%
  - In-person only: 11%
  - No followup: 16%

- **COPD**
  - Telehealth only: 22%
  - In-person only: 19%
  - No followup: 24%

- **Heart Failure**
  - Telehealth only: 22%
  - In-person only: 20%
  - No followup: 28%

- **Pneumonia**
  - Telehealth only: 17%
  - In-person only: 16%
  - No followup: 21%

• Telehealth follow-up may be an important strategy for reducing barriers to care among HRRP patients who would otherwise not pursue timely follow-up.