

# Digital Health

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## Narrowing the care gaps or widening the digital divide? – An American rural population health perspective

Covid 19 pandemic catalysed the transformation of global digital health technology. Telehealth emerged as a safer and cost-effective health care delivery platform serving American consumers, despite several challenges. Besides assisting the hospital systems in delivering acute, episodic care during the pandemic, Telehealth unearthed few root causes for disparities in population health, as evidenced by our comprehensive physician-based survey results in May 2020. The providers delivered 57% of the care via Telehealth during May 2020. The utilization of Telehealth among the providers we surveyed was only 1% in Pre-Covid 19 era. The providers expected to keep Telehealth to deliver 25% of the care in Post-Covid 19 era. While most of the Telehealth encounters utilized an internet-based live audio-video interface, about 26% of the patients had access to an audio-only telephone device. This study also provided insights into key drivers of disparity in population health outcomes in our state. The providers' had about 12% appointment cancellations during normal, Pre-Covid 19 times, opposed to <5% during the pandemic. 60% of the providers indicated that the drivers of poor access to ambulatory healthcare services such as transport issues, distance, disability, and disease-specific barriers could be addressed using Telehealth. Routine and post-procedure follow-ups, medication refills, and reviews of tests account for about 53% of the provider's services in the outpatient setting, which can be delivered via Telehealth. A successful digital health strategy must consider the urban-rural divide and social determinants of health while solving the last mile problems in the modern healthcare system.

### Biography

Chandra Lingisetty is a physician, keynote speaker, and healthcare executive with extensive medical and surgical training in India, the UK, and the USA. In addition to an MBA degree in the USA, he has a Masters degree in healthcare management from Harvard University. He is the Chief Administrative Officer at Baptist Health Physician Partners/Baptist Health, a USA-based not-for-profit integrated healthcare delivery system. He has published several scientific papers in reputed journals and serves as the editorial board member in peer-reviewed journals.

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