

PRESS RELEASE

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Physical Therapy Could Be Coming Soon to a Small Screen Near You

Technology is making it possible for patients to schedule virtual care sessions with physicians, and soon physical therapy sessions could be remote as well. And patients appear to be on board with the trend. In fact, nearly 77% of consumers are willing to consider meeting with a healthcare provider virtually, according to a [Virtual Visits Consumer Choice Survey](#) from Advisory Board.

While telemedicine is unlikely to completely replace physical therapy's in-person, hands-on approach, the care delivery model is well positioned to serve as a complementary service in certain patient populations. The Cleveland Clinic [recently conducted a study](#) using home-based virtual physical therapy with 157 post-op knee surgery patients. In addition to other measures, the study authors assessed the patients' ability to adhere to the program and the results were encouraging: Nearly 80% of study participants adhered to all prescribed home therapy. That statistic is in sharp contrast to the self-reported adherence rates of 35 to 70% in traditional PT settings.

Patients enrolled in the Cleveland Clinic study used a telerehabilitation system that was equipped with an instructional avatar, three-dimensional motion measurement and analysis software, and real-time televisit capability. Adherence was measured by how many times the patients complied with the prescribed exercise programs—as well as time spent performing the exercises. The televisits were conducted in conjunction with a few in-person visits in the outpatient clinic.

Patients fail to follow through on PTs' recommendations for a home exercise program—or fail to show to up for a scheduled in-person visit—for a variety of reasons. But telehealth services can help alleviate some of the burden on patients like securing transportation to the PT clinic, getting child care coverage, or having the proper supervision to ensure that exercises are completed properly.

For healthcare providers, patient engagement is universally one of the biggest challenges. And while still relatively new, telehealth technology is making it possible for physical therapists to reach their patients in their homes and to keep them actively engaged in their own care.

As telehealth begins to infiltrate the physical therapy profession, there's evidence that the intervention makes patients feel engaged, supported and motivated. Virtual physical therapy could become a more widespread avenue for providing on-demand, high-quality care. Would you participate?

About The Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association

Founded in 1956, the Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association champions the success of physical therapist-owned businesses. Our members are leaders and innovators in the health care system. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 85,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy nationwide. For more information, please visit www.ppsapta.org.